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PERREN BAKER AND THE UNITED FARMERS OF ALBERTA -
EDUCATIONAL PRINCIPLES AND POLICIES OF AN AGRARIAN GOVERNMENT

by



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A THESIS

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The undersigned certify that they have read,
and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for
acceptance, a thesis entitled "Perren Baker and the
United Farmers of Alberta - Educational Principles and
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for the degree of Master of Education.

ABSTRACT

In 1921 the electorate of the province of Alberta rejected traditional party politics and elected to political office a seemingly radical agrarian party which promised to bring significant social and political changes within the province. Not only did the leadership of this farmer movement reject party politics and what they considered the corruption of traditional partisanship, but they were determined to maintain and build a good society upon the agrarian-based way of life of the people of the prairies. Education was to have served as a key to the good society.

Unfortunately for the idealists within the United Farmers of Alberta organization, they were a minority in the wider provincial agrarian movement. The majority of U.F.A. members were concerned only in securing a better economic deal for themselves. Most of Alberta's farmers were not interested in schools doing anything but what schools had always done: providing their sons and daughters with the rudimentary skills of reading, writing and computing.

Thus it was that the U.F.A. Government, dominated by the most pragmatic of people - the hard-nosed prairie farmer - was unable to make much change in the direction of social or political life in Alberta. Educational developments followed close upon the patterns established by earlier political regimes. Perren Baker, Minister of Education

during the U.F.A. political regime in Alberta, was unwilling to respond to the advice of the educational reformers within the U.F.A. movement, for Mr. Baker was first and foremost a pragmatist. He and his fellow cabinet ministers, like all good politicians, were concerned with maintaining political power, for that is what politics is all about. Unfortunately, he and the U.F.A. Government were unwilling to gamble on pushing through the legislation which might have been their greatest educational achievement: the establishing of the larger unit of school administration. The Minister of Education did, nevertheless, expend great effort in promoting his so-called Baker Bill. When the legislation was finally enacted in 1936, one year after the U.F.A. had been defeated in a provincial election by the new Social Credit political party, the way had already been prepared by Mr. Baker.

This thesis traces the career of Perren Baker, Minister of Education during the fourteen years of U.F.A. Government in Alberta, shows the kinds of reform put forward by various idealists within the U.F.A. movement, and describes the fight for the larger unit waged by Mr. Baker and the Department of Education.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In his "Reminiscences"¹ Hon. Perren Baker recalled those early years when life on the prairie was largely agrarian, revolving around the local school house:

...though robbed of its stable and outhouses, the deserted school stood on its knoll, a lonely landmark seen for miles around; a melancholy symbol of more populous days when it had been the center of a spirited community.²

The decade 1920-1930 saw an agrarian movement in Alberta endeavor to preserve something of a pre-industrial way of life based upon the virtues of the frontier. This thesis traces the struggle that the agrarians underwent in trying, through the schools, to build a dignified and worthwhile social order for the common people of the province.

Purpose and Scope of the Study

In this thesis, an attempt will be made to identify the relationship between the ideas, hopes and aspirations of the Alberta agrarian movement of the nineteen-twenties, a movement calling itself the United Farmers of Alberta, and the educational policy which the movement, once in political power, embarked upon. Was the educational policy of the U.F.A. Government motivated by the ideological point-of-view of the wider agrarian movement? Second, this thesis docu-

ments the life and career of one of Alberta's pioneer educationists, Hon. Perren Earle Baker. Mr. Baker held the education portfolio longer than any other person in the history of Alberta, being Minister of Education throughout the fourteen years in which the U.F.A. formed the government in Alberta, from 1921 to 1935.

It is difficult to understand just what the agrarian movement in Alberta was. One wing of the movement, for example, consisted of visionaries and utopians of various stripe, such as Henry Wise Wood and the believers in co-operation, William Irvine and the socialists, and George Bevington and the monetary reformers. On the other wing of the movement was a conglomerate of pragmatists, men and women who used the United Farmers of Alberta movement to strengthen and secure their own economic position.

Much of the material available on the agrarian phenomenon, and this is true of the scholarly books and articles as well, places considerably more stress on the idealistic wing of the movement. In this thesis, the writer will try to determine if the idealistic elements within the U.F.A. actually dominated the policy of the movement when it gained political power in the province, especially in the area of education.

Mr. Baker was a prominent leader in the agrarian movement. He farmed successfully in the south of the province, and joined the U.F.A. when it first began organizing in his area. His dedication to the movement and his educational background gained him the Education Portfolio in

Alberta's first and only Farmer Government. Mr. Baker's role in administering this important Department will be presented.

Finally, the writer will attempt to determine if educational evolution was in any way altered by the intrusion into the traditional political arena of this unorthodox political manifestation of Western Canadian frontierism and idealism.

Need For The Study

This study was justified, first because agrarianism has been, and continues to be, a significant ideological movement in the Western Canadian provinces, and the period from the early 1920's to mid-1930's was probably the time it made its greatest impact on Canadian institutions. Second, the legislation for the larger school unit, presented first by Hon. Perren Baker, later proved to be one of the most significant educational changes to occur in the evolution of Canada's public school system. And finally, many of the principals who were involved in this historical period are still alive and able to contribute information concerning the events of the time.

Sources of Information

There were four major areas in which research was carried out. For background political information on the pre-1921 period, Dr. L.G. Thomas' definitive study, The Liberal Party in Alberta,³ was the basic text, supplemented by scattered general and newspaper reading. For reference

material on the agrarian movement, the writer relied upon the established sources in this field, for example, the work done by Professors Paul Sharp, W.L. Morton and William Rolph. For background on Alberta's education system, several theses in the libraries of the University of Alberta were researched.⁴ As well, the two recent studies done by Dr. J.W. Chalmers⁵ proved most useful. Finally, for the study of Mr. Baker's life and career, the writer employed interviews with principals involved in this period, like Mr. Baker himself, Mr. & Mrs. E.W. Cormack, friends of Mrs. Irene Parlby, and Dr. Chester Ronning, former U.F.A. member of the Provincial Legislature. As well, letters were written to and received from others who know the period. Finally, useful material was found in the Provincial Library and Archives and the Glenbow Archives in Calgary.

CHAPTER II

THE LIBERAL PARTY AND EDUCATION IN ALBERTA, 1905-1921

Politics

Under three premiers, A.C. Rutherford, 1905-1910, Arthur Sifton, 1910-1917, and Charles Stewart, 1917-1921, the Liberal Party held power in Alberta for sixteen years. During this time four men held the education portfolio, Premier A.C. Rutherford, 1905-1910, C.R. Mitchell, 1910-1912, J.R. Boyle, 1912-1918, and George P. Smith, 1918-1921.

It was a Liberal administration in Ottawa which made it possible for Liberalism to gain a foothold in Alberta, but even without this assist it is likely that the Liberal party would have been the party of the new West:

The basis, more emotional than intellectual, for the conservative outlook ceased to exist; to the progressive newcomer the Conservative party was vulnerable to attack as the party of privilege and big business of restrictions on settlement and tariffs. The Conservative party had little to offer the newcomer....It was the Liberals who attracted their support....yet skillful political organization alone could not have won the sweeping victory of 1905; at the root of the Liberal triumph lies this change in the human geography of the provinceIt also marked the triumph of the new man over the oldtimers.¹

The "Reform Liberalism" of Western Canada laid great stress on individual initiative and private enterprise, coupled with provision for widespread opportunity for all citizens. Although the government adhered to laissez-faire practices, provincial initiative would be taken when the public interest could be served: examples of this were the

collectivization of the telephone system in 1907, and government action in encouraging the building of provincial railway lines. It was the latter activity which brought the Rutherford government into turmoil. The cabinet and house members split over the handling of railway contracts, and Mr. Rutherford made his decision to resign as premier.² Rutherford was succeeded in 1910 by Alberta's Chief Justice, Arthur Sifton, who presided over a province growing economically stronger and more optimistic. Premier Sifton resigned in 1917 to enter Sir Robert Borden's Union Government while the provincial Liberals were riding high. The commission which had been established to investigate the corruption charges against Premier Rutherford cleared him of dishonest practices, though the Liberals continued to be plagued into the nineteen-twenties by rumor of corruption.

As Premier Charles Stewart, the farmer-premier of the Liberal party who came from Sedgewick, began his term of office, the fledgling province began to experience serious difficulties. Although the Great War had blessed Alberta with considerable prosperity, political administration was made burdensome by the dissension within the ranks of the Liberal Party. Premier Stewart was a strong supporter of Borden's Union Government, but Charles Cross, who had rejoined the cabinet in 1910 as Attorney-General, was strongly anti-Union. Cross' presence in the cabinet was found to be intolerable, so he was dismissed in 1918.³ He and his followers became serious obstacles for the Stewart government.

The situation was further complicated by the

growing dissatisfaction in the West. There was widespread belief through the prairies that Eastern economic interests were favored over the West.

While developing as a distinct section acutely aware of its peculiar interests, the West became more and more conscious of its weakness in federal politics. As a sparsely settled populated region its representation was only a small part of the national representation in parliament. After 1896 the decennial revision of representation in the federal House of Commons lagged behind the growth of its population, and because of this the West was to be inadvertently denied the representation to which it was entitled....⁴

Another kind of disgruntlement was that found among the agrarians in the Western Provinces who felt alienated from developments in Eastern Canada. They had openly expressed opposition to the wholesale industrialization of Canada when they marched on Ottawa in 1910, and hoped that a tariff reduction, if actualized, would limit further industrialization and prevent, "poverty, disease and tyranny."⁵

The unhappiness with Eastern interests and with Eastern politics carried over to a growing rejection of party politics on the Prairies. Overt expression was given to the many malcontents by various farmer groups, such as the Grain Growers' Organizations which had been organized shortly after provincehood. In Alberta, a powerful and effective agrarian instrument was the Non-Partisan League which began organizing in 1917, and elected two members to the Legislature in that year's election.⁶ The Non-Partisan League was doctrinaire and aggressive, and "introduced into Canadian politics an aggressive group consciousness which profoundly influenced the development of the farmers' move-

ment in Alberta...."⁷ The growing anti-partisan pressure was acutely obvious to the pre-1921 Liberal government. Like their Saskatchewan counterparts, they legislated for the powerful farm community. Prohibition and suffrage for women were two landmarks of the period. Nevertheless, the agrarian tide was not to be stemmed by any political tokenism:

Stewart carried on acceptably enough as provincial premier and was often praised for his non-partisan outlook, but his personal popularity did not conceal a general impatience with his government, and a widespread feeling that there was some better solution to the problem of provincial administration than blind support of the old-line parties."⁸

In the 1921 provincial election, the U.F.A. swept to power with thirty-nine seats. The shattered Liberals were left with a meagre fourteen. One seat was held by the Conservatives.

Compromise

Democratic government is predicated on a belief in compromise, for there is always the continuing play of interests. Education is no exception to this, as two prominent examples handily demonstrate. The resolution of what has come to be known as the "School Question" in 1905 is the first example. The attempt of the Laurier Government to shore-up Roman Catholic educational rights within the 1905 Autonomy Bill was opposed strongly by a majority of people in the Territories, aware of their constitutional jurisdiction, and jealous of their coming status as autonomous bodies. Many voices of the West were calling for

one school system for all children. This meant, of course, a break with the customs and problems of the Old World, fully in keeping with the kind of development marking the Prairie region at the time. The French and Roman Catholic population at the time had by this time been submerged beneath the thousands of non-French flocking to the promised land. One unified, non-sectarian system was possible; nevertheless, provincial legislation extended several privileges to the Roman Catholic minority in order to hold their loyalty.⁹

The second example of the compromise principle occurred during the last years of Liberal power in the province, and involved the one Minister of Education, George Peter Smith, who has achieved, if not fame, at least notoriety. Heading West to make name and fortune, he worked as a successful merchant and newspaperman. In the latter capacity he is remembered as the founder of the Camrose Canadian, still an active weekly sixty years later.¹⁰ Smith, like so many of his contemporaries, dreamed of a stable and peaceful land, overflowing with abundance and opportunity for all who made some effort on their own behalf. Smith's interest in such matters led him into provincial politics; his ability led him to the cabinet, first as Provincial Secretary, then as Minister of Education, 1918-1921. The year before Smith's move to the Ministry of Education marked the founding of the Alberta Teachers' Alliance. From its inception the Alliance was aggressive in its demands. As could be expected, the teachers agitated for changes which

would better their own position. As early as 1918, they were calling for a \$1200.00 minimum salary, collective bargaining, security of tenure, smaller class loads, and teacher representation on school boards.¹¹ Two years later, in 1920, the demands became more strident when an official magazine was founded to explain the position of organized teachers, and John Barnett was hired as their executive-secretary. Many of the plans of the Teachers' Alliance were brought to a standstill by Hon. George P. Smith. He was suspicious of this teachers' group, patterned as it was in many ways after the militant British teachers' union.¹² He knew that the great majority of school boards, especially those in rural areas, would be unable to meet the demands of the teachers; he believed that many of the teachers also looked upon the militant teachers' organization as a radical group.¹³ On the one hand Smith had the teachers demanding better working conditions, and his own desire to improve the status of the teacher;¹⁴ on the other hand, he had to consider the suspicious public who had not yet accepted teachers as professionals. George P. Smith was conscientious and concerned: he wanted to bring improvements to the education system of Alberta. On September 4, 1919, in the Camrose Canadian he wrote:

It should not be forgotten that teachers salaries have wonderfully increased in the last year or two. There is a very rapidly increasing number of attractive positions offered in the teaching profession. Young people could have no more valuable asset than a life certificate as a teacher, which may open up innumerable avenues for them. The future of the teaching profession is very bright and in addition to the certainty of profit-

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able occupations there is unlimited scope for the most important type of social and national service.¹⁵

In spite of the Minister's intentions, circumstances forced him to deny the teachers most of the protection which would raise the teaching profession to anywhere near Alliance expectations. Because of his intransigence, the Minister may have accomplished more than he could ever realize. Dr. Chalmers writes:

Probably few men had as much influence as he in building up the Alberta Teachers' Alliance, for his savage and unremitting opposition to the young professional organization must have convinced many teachers that only if they stood together could they hope to prevail against such hostility. With enemies like him, what organization needed friends?¹⁶

Isidore Goresky gives what this writer feels is a reasonable evaluation of the difficulties facing the Liberal administration during these difficult years:

It is no wonder they groped everywhere trying one thing and another....And, in the main, they built better than they knew. As yet [1918] there was no quickened interest among the teachers to help them. When it did come suddenly as the result of men returning from the war with new ideas, it is no wonder that the official world was dazed by the suddenness of the change....In the meantime, the Alberta school system had developed about as far as possible under the conditions prevailing at that time.¹⁷

Encouragement

The government of Premier Rutherford approached educational development with "enthusiasm and zeal,"¹⁸ and by the end of 1905, 144 new school districts had been organized throughout the province.¹⁹ Although these new districts had been established upon the initiative of the local residents, grants from the Department of Education,

"among the most liberal in Canada,"²⁰ made this establishment so successful. The legislative grants were calculated to stimulate efficiency in a number of important areas:

In the determination of that portion of the grant which is based on the number of days the school is kept open and the average attendance, the difficulties with which the rural schools have to contend are recognized and a considerably higher rate provided as a basis of calculation. Special grants are made to schools doing secondary work and to those employing teachers with first-class professional certificates. There is also a special grant for efficiency with respect to grounds, buildings, equipment, government, and progress....The payment of grants is made subject to compliance with the regulations set down in the ordinance. This is a practical guarantee of the punctual and accurate discharge of those obligations which are incumbent upon the trustee boards or the municipalities concerned.²¹

L.G. Thomas, writing of the first Assembly in the province, makes the claim that the "adaptation and development of the territorial education system to the needs of the province" is one of the three "striking accomplishments" of that first Assembly.²² The kind of system was, of course, the individual unit in the rural areas, and the one large unit for the towns and cities. The small rural school district was the ideal pattern for the developing West at the time. The community spirit, so much a part of the pioneer environment, could be stirred in the cause of education. As well, the small district was simple to form and administer, and economically reasonable to operate.²³

It is to the credit of Dr. Rutherford and his government that such a successful start on school district organization was made in Alberta. The premier, vitally interested in higher education, also passed the University

Act in the final moments of that first Assembly, and sincerely "looked forward with enthusiasm to the founding of what would soon become a great seat of learning, which would serve the higher educational interests of the province and react upon its life."²⁴ Finally, in 1911, classes moved to the first building erected on the site for the University, Athabasca Hall.²⁵

This much was accomplished during the Ministry of Hon. A.C. Rutherford in times which were difficult for the promotion and encouragement of education. In reminiscing about those days when Alberta was young, Mrs. J.E. Cook, who taught in the early schools, gives an example of the kind of hardships faced.

There were two children going to school, aged seven and twelve, so on particularly cold days were provided with transportation. One morning the thermometer did not record the temperature--the mercury was a small ball in the bulb. We heard later that it registered seventy-two degrees below zero that day. We wrapped up as warm as possible and when we got to school found the fourteen year old janitor and his ten year old brother with badly frozen hands. The fire had been built so the Secretary thawed the ice from the water bucket and after filling it with loose snow started to work on the older boy's handsThe boys were very very plucky--they did not complain once and seemed to have complete faith in our ministrations....²⁶

Another area in which the Liberals gave encouragement was that of rural education. At this time, and for many years to come, many in the West believed that there was a kind of education best suited for those who would spend their lives on the farm. Agrarian leaders who saw the need for such a bias brought pressure to bear on the government directly, and the university indirectly, to have

their desires instituted. During the Rutherford Ministry charges were brought against President Tory for confining agricultural education within the walls of his university. Dr. Rutherford stoutly defended the president:

He [Rutherford] stated that the best part of the province favoured keeping the agricultural college in close connection with the University and the Senate of the University would be pleased to meet with a committee of the farm organization and discuss the question of agricultural education in the province'.²⁷

The pressure from the farm organizations did serve to bring the plight of the rural schools to the attention of the Department of Education with resulting benefits. In 1911, experimental farms were begun, and two years later three agricultural schools were built in conjunction with these farms.

A Board of Agricultural Education was formed to supervise this extension of agricultural education.²⁸ In 1913, enabling legislation and an accompanying grant structure made possible the formation of consolidated school districts. This move brought secondary education within the reach of many rural youth. Pressures continued to come from various farm groups and their powerful journals and weeklies. By 1918, the problems faced by the Department of Education were reaching alarming proportions. There was widespread demand for secondary education, but a shortage of facilities and trained teachers. George P. Smith, the last Liberal Minister of Education gave encouragement to the farm community by expressing his own concern and commitment:

The Honourable G.P. Smith referred to the profession of faith he had made...regarding his own conception of the provinces responsibilities in regard to the rural problems of education, the rural schools and the rural teachers, showing how deeply he felt that the rural school problems were the very foundation of the educational system, not only of the province and the dominion, but of the empire....²⁹

Smith also put his concern into action. In the School Act of 1918, several changes were made. The most important innovation was the extra grant given for the two-room school, "one of the most practical administrative reforms undertaken."³⁰ This reform, Goresky adds, "enabled the rural people to enjoy some of the blessings of secondary education and gave an opportunity for the division of work in the elementary section." Provisions were also made in the 1918 legislation for the encouragement of vocational education in the larger areas, construction of teacherages to minimize the transient teacher problem, and the raising of the minimum age to fifteen in order to give rural youth more adequate educational preparations.³¹ The next year in the School Grant's Act, the grant system was increased again. Many rural students were able to obtain their secondary schooling in a village high school. The opportunity of secondary education was opened up even wider by the elimination of the fees which normally were paid by out-of district students attending village high schools.³² Finally, the various attempts culminated in the passing, in 1921, in the dying days of the Liberal administration, an amendment to the school ordinance to provide for the consolidation of rural high schools. The legislation, it was

hoped, would succeed where previous consolidation legislation failed. Affecting secondary grades only, the legislation would simplify transportation and other organizational problems, but even with the easier arrangements necessary, and additional grants available, only nineteen such districts were organized.³³ Perhaps the legislation was too little, too late. Apparently many districts were interested, "but were frightened of the additional costs."³⁴ Of the small rural high schools that were formed, not all of them were that successful either:³⁵

Few demands were made on a Rural High School at its inception. Department officials were lenient in their definition of what were adequate buildings, furnishings and equipment. Expenses were kept as low as possible until a community became accustomed to the advantages of secondary education and was willing to share the costs of improvement.³⁶

Initiative

Of the many problems faced in education by the Liberal governments in those early years, three especially demanded initiative in working through to a solution. Perhaps the most serious problem was the schooling of non-English speaking immigrant children. Dr. G.S. Lord, an inspector of schools in the Lamont area before 1921, considers the work done with the children of immigrants as a "very considerable achievement."³⁷

Perren Baker, as Minister, carried forward the program initiated under his predecessors. Another problem which faced the Liberals was the shortage of qualified teachers. The Calgary Normal School had been opened in

January, 1906 - likely as a compromise move, the university having gone to Strathcona, - but the inaccessibility of this institute warranted the opening in 1912, of a normal school at Camrose. This latter institute in its rural setting was to have provided proper training for prospective rural teachers, but "no facilities for practice work under rural school conditions were provided."³⁸ Serious criticism, especially by farm groups, was levied against the Department of Education for failure to utilize the rural setting at Camrose. It was not until 1928 that Camrose Normal School made provision for a "rural experience" in its program, likely out of deference to the farm community now in control of the provincial government. The third Normal school, that in Edmonton, began its teacher training program in 1920, and served primarily the urban young people of the capital city. This school operated from a temporary building, awaiting the completion of a teacher training institution on the university campus.³⁹ This development would come under the next regime. To improve the quality of the teacher it would be important to improve the preparation and increase the quantity of teachers available. The Liberal Ministers made some effort to increase the length of the Normal Course during their years in government, but they faced a continuing and aggravating teacher shortage, and so had to rely on permit teachers far too extensively. The loans made available to preparing teachers was a step to alleviate the shortage. The A.T.A. Magazine at the time censured the government for this loan policy. Not only will

there be an inflation in teacher quantity, and the economic ramifications of that, the editors announced, but loans were demoralizing and crippling as well:

It looks very much as if the State, in its quest for cheap education, were profiting at the expense of certain unsophisticated young persons, and ruining the teaching profession as well.⁴⁰

The third problem faced by government officials and educators in any new system is that of curricula. At first the Ontario pattern was copied, but as early as three years after achieving independent provincial status, a curriculum committee was meeting under Dr. Henry M. Tory.

In the planning of the new courses a special endeavor was made to realize the highest ideals of social efficiency in the work of the schools, and to make it possible to put into practice educational methods which are at once natural and scientific.⁴¹

In 1910 this committee presented its report. Weight was given to academic, industrial, physical and agricultural training at the various school levels in Alberta. In meeting these three problems, the Department of Education under Rutherford, Boyle, Mitchell and Smith had some success.

Promotion

The Liberal governments of Alberta must be given credit for the promotion of education at all levels and in various circumstances throughout the province. The "Reform Liberals" of Alberta believed in the extension of educational opportunity to all.

"With the help of the new School Act 1918", he [G.P. Smith] said, "we are going to have in Alberta the finest school organization in the Dominion of Canada. An organization which true to its democratic

ideals is going to provide equal education for all its children, whether in the cities or in the rural districts. The new School Act is as complete as human brains could at the moment frame it."⁴²

During the period up to 1921, the schools began their important transformation: from small, locally controlled schools, they became state schools, dominated by the central government on behalf of the collective. In the article quoted above, Honorable Mr. Smith could also announce that, "The state would pay for the education of the children wishing for high school education." It was, in part, the reaction to this centralizing trend which blocked the climax of the process - the large unit - at the end of the decade.

Educational opportunity was extended throughout the province on a limited scale. The Provincial Institute of Technology was under construction in 1920,⁴³ to provide pre-vocational programmes for students in grades seven, eight and nine, and eventually higher. The University of Alberta, aided by provincial grants, was enabled to establish its Department of Extension with its function made clear by Dr. Tory himself:

The people demand that knowledge shall not be the concern of the scholars alone. The uplifting of the whole people shall be its final goal. This should be the concern of all educated men: it should never be forgotten.⁴⁴

The Liberal Governments also aided the cause of adult education by promoting and subsidizing two organizations which played important roles in early Alberta. One organization was the Women's Institute of Alberta. The or-

ganization, founded in 1911, purposed to make better homes and families throughout the province. The government helped provide a salaried supervisor and a demonstration train to publicize and promote its work.⁴⁵ The Alberta Education Association, subsidized by the provincial government, was devoted to the cause of better education. Dominated by school inspectors and normal school instructors, and composed of teachers and interested laymen from various professions and careers, the A.E.A. was prominent in helping to form the educational patterns in pre-U.F.A. Alberta.

The educational record of the Liberal governments has been, not exceptional, but meritorious. Dr. B.E. Walker records that the Liberal political leaders "gave only sporadic attention to the problems of secondary education,"⁴⁶ at least until the closing years of their power in Alberta. Of course, the economic and social climates were not conducive to fostering post-elementary schooling on the Prairies. Nevertheless, under the ministry of Honorable A.C. Rutherford the founding system was established. And under Honorable George Peter Smith, moves were undertaken to place post-elementary schooling within the reach of the youth of Alberta.

CHAPTER III

THE FARMERS' MOVEMENT IN ALBERTA AND THROUGHOUT CANADA

Origins and Early Development of the United Farmers of Alberta, 1909-1919

In the decade 1920-1930 Canadians witnessed a new political phenomenon: the emergence of a Third Force as a rival to the traditional political parties. This Third Force in Canadian politics was no unified movement, but a mixture of discontented groups who fought for political, economic and social reform, sometimes in unity with others, but often alone. The purpose of this chapter will be to investigate the most significant segment of this so-called Progressive Party in Canadian politics - the agrarian movement, and more particularly, the agrarian movement in Alberta. The United Farmers of Alberta, the most politically successful of the various farmer groups, held power in Alberta from 1921 to 1935. This paper will be centered on the Alberta farmers, but will also investigate the agrarian political phenomenon in other provinces of Canada and in the federal sphere.

At the simplest level, the United Farmers of Alberta was a group of farmers, joined in voluntary association, who believed that they could make the life on the farm more successful and secure for all. Officially, the United Farmers of Alberta was formed in 1909 when the

American oriented Society of Equity - humbled by serious set backs in its business ventures - agreed to unite with the Ontario oriented, Northern - based, Alberta Farmers' Association - largely an organization devoted to farmer education.¹ As was the pattern elsewhere, the organized farmers in Alberta divided their energies in two directions - the one, in organizing and educating the farmers to work for their rights; the other, in establishing commercial distribution and production facilities in order to escape the crippling monopolies of Eastern business interests. This was the United Farmers of Alberta on the surface; this was what the majority of people in the nineteen twenties understood United Farmers of Alberta to mean. But there were roots to this movement which sank into all manner of political, social and economic ideologies. For example, to many, the revolt of the farmers in North America was basically a rejection of the industrialized and organized state, with its concomitant poverty, disease and tyranny, and a romantic longing for the pastoral beginnings of society on the western plains! To others, the farmers were the hope for the establishment of a true democracy and an end to the tyranny of cabinet domination and political partyism. Thus, techniques such as referendum, recall, and proportional representation went the rounds within the Third Force. To still others, the rise of the farmers' movements can be best understood in the light of economic interpretation: as in America twenty and thirty years earlier - when the Populist and Non-Partisan movements gained considerable support - agrarian discontent came as a result

of the reliance on primary production, and the economic disadvantages of such a reliance.² But there can be little doubt that the majority of farmers, from the leadership down, saw the good life in terms of immediate and concrete improvement, rather than in some vague and distant utopia.³

There are at least four major causes that can explain the emergence of an agrarian protest movement in Alberta. First, Alberta has had a tradition of protest groups of various stripe, and before 1905, of course, a considerable period of non-partisan government. The early settlers in the West were fiercely independent. Men such as Frank Oliver adhered for a time to the non-partisan principle, for it was in working together that responsible government was achieved. Of these, the early farm protest groups, W.L. Morton writes:

They sought to educate their members in collective action, a knowledge of their legal and political rights, and an appreciation of the dignity of their calling. They sought to arouse class-consciousness, well-being and self-respect.⁴

A second explanation for the rise of the farmers' movement was the general discontent which was so widespread at the time. The farmers, with justice, believed that they were being exploited by the so-called Eastern interests. Grain prices were low, grain delivery via the Canadian Pacific Railway was precarious and expensive, and large land companies took advantage of many beginning farmers. In a statement issued in 1916, the Canadian Council of Agriculture - a federal farmers' body comprising all of the major provincial agrarian groups - expressed dissatisfaction with the

existing political and economic set-up:

Parliament is becoming more and more under the direct influence of industrial, financial and transportation interests, represented by men of wealth in financial and industrial centres.⁵

There was also considerable alienation from the Eastern-based political parties. The farmers had besieged Ottawa in 1910 with the intent of persuading the government to discontinue the policy of protection. Later, the Liberals were unable to change this policy, though at one time they had promised the farmers to take action on this. Continually, western leaders raised their voices against corrupt and sophisticated political practices, and many vowed that the first task of such a Third Force as theirs would be to free people from the grip of the old line parties. This discontent was coupled with the breakdown in the party system in Alberta after 1917. The organization of the Union government, which rankled the farm community by cancelling the farmers' previous military exemption, made it possible for a political alternative to prosper.

Without doubt, a third major factor in the spread of the agrarian protest movement was the quality of leadership found in the various groups. Of this leadership, W.L. Morton writes:

Never was the Canadian West more part of the world, better endowed with men of capacity, more alert to the force of ideas, than in the days of the great immigration.⁶

The list is long and impressive: ex-governor Leedy of Kansas, D.W. Warner, R.C. Owens, Rice Shepherd, Bower, Durnham and Gardiner are but a few. Americans fresh from

American Populism,⁷ Britons experienced in the labour and co-operative movements, Easterners who had been active in the Grange and Patrons societies, farmers, teachers and preachers, - and who can deny the impact on the frontier of the "Social Gospellers," men like Irvine, Bland and Woodsworth - all these made contributions to the reform movement. The most influential of them all was probably Henry Wise Wood. In many ways the story of the United Farmers of Alberta is the story of this dedicated leader. Biographer William Rolph does not solve the enigma of this man and his mystical ideology. It is from Wood that we have the most profound expression of the full meaning of the agrarian revolt. It is Wood who articulated for the movement the meaning of concepts such as co-operation, group government, convention control over politicians, and direct democracy. It was he who envisioned the perfect society, brought about by such a movement as he headed. Thousands followed him, many blindly; yet he was often reticent to lead. He brought a movement to power, yet refused to enjoy the fruits of that success. And he was surely a revolutionary thinker; yet, as Rolph writes, exercised "a conservative, stabilizing effect on U.F.A. conventions."⁸

Finally, an explanation of the agrarian revolt has been attempted by some scholars under various interpretations of the "frontier thesis."⁹ The frontier has provided the conditions which made radicalism and revolt likely: the challenge and struggle of making it on one's own; the possibility of building afresh, without the known mistakes of

the past; the freedom from the pressures and the institutions of the "Old World"; the need for one another and the brotherhood that was fostered. The specific agrarian revolt was only part of the larger spectrum of ferment at the time. Groups working for prohibition and womens' suffrage were active, and expressions of the political and religious utopian aspirations prominent during the period. The new immigrants who felt burdened with acute political grievances had an avenue of effective protest through the various farmer groups. Yet, this radicalism seldom got out of hand, for there was a vivid streak of order in the early west:

The claims to the interior of the continent were staked not by advancing frontier men, acting on their own, but by advancing armies and police forces, large corporate economic enterprises and ecclesiastical organizations, supported by the state. The Canadian political temper, has run sharply counter to the American. Those creeds of American politics - individual rights, local autonomy, and limitation of executive power -...have found less support within the Canadian political system.¹⁰

The United Farmers of Alberta Enter Politics, 1919-1921

Among the farm community of the Canadian West, there was considerable discontent, largely arising from economic inequity. For Henry Wise Wood, president of the United Farmers of Alberta from 1915 to 1931, organization for protection was the most effective mode of attack on the existing problems. Rather than direct political involvement, Wood had urged the various locals in the province to work within the established parties to ensure the election of men sympathetic to the farmers' cause. In spite of the

president's stand on political involvement, a large group within the U.F.A. movement became more and more vexed with the seeming inadequacy of the non-partisan approach. To satisfy this group, the 1919 U.F.A. Convention gave authorization for the formation of a political off-shoot to be formed. "That same year executives and directors of the district organizations met in Calgary and formed themselves into the U.F.A. Provincial Political Association."¹¹ O.L. McPherson, later to be the Speaker in the 1921 Legislative Assembly, became the first president of this short-lived group. A political test came that winter with the provincial by-election in Cochrane. Cochrane was a Liberal stronghold, having been the seat of the former Speaker of the Assembly, Hon. Charles Fisher.¹² Nonetheless, the U.F.A. Political Association was willing to tackle the Government here. Alexander W. Moore was nominated as their candidate. Henry Wise Wood, in spite of his opposition to wholesale political participation by his movement, spoke on Moore's behalf in the Constituency. In the election Moore was successful, and became the first U.F.A. member to sit in the Alberta Legislature. This victory was encouraging to those who believed that politics was the path that the farmers must follow. Discontented with Wood's unwillingness to concede the point, the malcontents supported Vice-President A.C. Muir in contesting the office of president at the 1921 Convention. Though Muir was soundly defeated in his bid,¹³

a twofold compromise was reached. First, the Political Association abolished itself; instead, each constituency was given the freedom to decide on an individual basis whether to become involved in politics. And second, the U.F.A. Movement decided not to enter politics as a political party, but rather as an economic organization. Thus was born the idea of group government.¹⁴ The stage was now set for the 1921 provincial election. Nearly every constituency organization fielded a candidate for the crucial election. There were three developments which to some degree explain why the United Farmers of Alberta finally made this move into the political sphere.

First, a significant impact on the thinking of United Farmers of Alberta members was made by an American-inspired group called the Non-Partisan League. This group of political activists, who were agrarian socialists by ideological persuasion, called for a broad-based party which could arouse group consciousness on behalf of political reform. Many of these reforms required extensive government activity in the economic realm. The League, led by such stalwarts as ex-governor Leedy, James Weir and William Irvine,¹⁵ had, for a time, hopes of becoming the political wing of the United Farmers of Alberta movement, but this move was frustrated by H.W. Wood, who eventually began shifting his own supporters in that direction as well. The Non-Partisan League did achieve considerable success in its short existence. It began organizing in earnest in February 1917; and by June 1917, and the provincial election, two

members were able to win seats in the Legislature - James Weir of Nanton and Mrs. Louise McKinney of Claresholm. (The latter, Mrs. McKinney, being the first woman elected to a British parliament.)

A second explanation for the U.F.A. move into politics was the brief but significant political success of the Non-Partisan League, followed shortly by other prophetic successes. Two years later, for example, in the 1919 Cochrane provincial by-election, U.F.A. candidate Alexander W. Moore won the seat. The same year, Canadians were astounded to learn that a farmer-labour government under Charles Drury had come to power in Ontario. A most significant test for the U.F.A. was the 1921 federal by-election in Medicine Hat. Robert Gardiner was the successful U.F.A. nominee for the contest. At the nominating convention he was opposed by Perren Baker and several other lesser known personalities. Gardiner was successful in the election, and, of course, both men went on to greater things. Full of confidence, the U.F.A. locals throughout the province waited expectantly for Premier Stewart to call the provincial election. When the date was set, they threw caution to the winds and entered politics. The leaders of the U.F.A. Movement were not expecting to win that election.¹⁶ Adhering to Wood's concept of group government, they merely wanted to ensure a significant voice in Edmonton for the farmer. It had been the federal field which drew the attention of the farmers, for here the decisions were made which angered and frustrated them. Perhaps this frustration was released

on the provincial Liberals who, unlike the Saskatchewan Liberals, had not taken care to scrupulously disassociate themselves from the federal Liberals.¹⁷

Finally, Premier Stewart's government, torn with dissension between pro - and anti-Union government supporters, and aware of the growing power of the discontented farmers, was unable to initiate measures which could improve the serious economic conditions reaching alarming proportions.¹⁸ L.G. Thomas writes of that faltering Liberal government:

The sudden collapse of agricultural prices which plunged Alberta into depression that was all the grimmer in contrast to the hectic prosperity of the war years, would by itself have been enough to destroy a government as old and tired as that of Stewart and the Liberals. The government had shown, in its handling of the northern railways, irrigation, and the liquor traffic, little grasp of the realities of the post-war period.¹⁹

The election, hard-fought and bitter, saw the U.F.A. win two thirds of the seats in the Legislature. The entry into politics was accomplished, a move which, in part, was later to be the cause of the downfall of the farmers' movement in Alberta.²⁰

The Farmers' Revolt Throughout the Dominion of Canada 1921-1931

The year 1921 was a momentous year for the farmers of Canada. In this year, a farmer group achieved electoral success in Alberta, and in the federal election of that year sixty-five members were sent to Ottawa to represent farmer and progressive groups in Canada. This third force

played a significant role in federal politics. Evaluating that role, W.K. Rolph writes:

...the United Farmers of Alberta members were able to secure improved credit facilities, a number of amendments to the Canadian Grain Act, and changes in political procedure giving recognition to the presence of third parties....The achievements of this group justify Wood's claim that the only way to secure agrarian reforms was through political action established on a co-operative basis.²¹

But the hope of the democratization of Canadian politics soon was frustrated. The unity within the Progressive movement was, in three short years, rent to an irreconcilable extent. The most serious cause of division was over political strategy. The so-called "Manitoba group," holding the support of Progressive parliamentary leaders Crerar and Forke, and Ontario premier E.C. Drury, thought of the Progressive Party as a genuine third political force. They attempted to broaden their base of support by including labourites and socialists, and employing party discipline within their ranks. The opposing group, comprising most of the Alberta members, and Agnes McPhail and W.C. Good from Ontario, adhered to the group government ideal of Henry Wood, and refused to be bound by caucus decision.²² Two further complicating factors were, first, the overtures of Prime Minister King which pulled many Progressives towards the Liberal party, and eventually into it; and second, the ideological gap which continued to widen within the Progressive ranks between the socialists and the private enterprisers. From their beginnings, the farmers' groups had attracted a various array of political and economic positions.

And always a continuing and frustrating force within these movements, and the United Farmers of Alberta in particular, was the left-wingers who attempted to use the larger movement as a vehicle for their political ends. While Henry Wise Wood remained president of the United Farmers of Alberta, the socialist element was held in check. After H.W. Wood stepped down from the presidency of the U.F.A. and Robert Gardiner took office, the United Farmers of Alberta movement, especially the leadership of that movement, swung considerably to the left. In fact, after 1932, the United Farmers of Alberta endorsed the fledgling Co-operative Commonwealth Federation as the political expression of their federal aims, and ceased preaching the long-held doctrines - group government, co-operation and direct democracy which had been espoused by Henry Wise Wood since 1917.²³

The Progressive Party had one brief moment in Ottawa. By the end of the decade, its work consummated, Progressivism had faded into history:

In province after province west of the Quebec border civil service reform, and health, labour, child welfare, and other forms of social legislation, had become commonplace. Even Ottawa had been stirred by the breath of reform....²⁴

In the provinces other than Alberta there were a few brief successes. In every province men and women, running under labels of farmer, progressive or something similar, contested constituencies and found some success. In Ontario, the farmers held power from 1919 to 1923.

Though unable to establish a viable regime because of the serious internal dissension, the lack of party discipline, and the relatively small population base to which they were able to appeal in an industrialized area, they made some noticeable social advances.²⁵ The farmers had about the same degree of success in Manitoba. The Liberal government of Premier Norris had produced several pieces of "Progressive legislation," but was unable to disassociate itself as completely as it might have from the federal Liberal Party. The United Farmers of Manitoba, in the provincial election of 1922, offered an alternative to a province deep in the throes of the depression. Of that election, Morton writes.

The election of 1922 was a political divide in Manitoba politics. It also marked the attempt by a province still predominantly agricultural to find relief from the stresses of rapid change, an exhausting war, and a deep depression, by returning to its origins, the rural virtues of thrift, sobriety and patient labour.²⁶

The Farmers' government of Manitoba did not suffer defeat. Instead, like soft clay, it was refashioned until eventually it was unrecognizable.²⁷ This province, with its metropolis-capital containing half its people, and its strong labour force which often alienated the farmer, could not long be dominated by a group of farmers for any long period of time.

Like Manitoba, the Liberal Governments of Saskatchewan were friends of the farmer and had few ties with the Federal Liberals. As a result, the Liberal party held power throughout the nineteen-twenties. The major farm group of Saskatchewan was the Saskatchewan Grain Growers Association, several of whose leaders - Motherwell, Dunning, Langley and

Maharg - were also prominent Liberals. Here was a case of an organization, the Grain Growers, dominating the government of that province; it was the perfect union of agrarianism and Liberalism. Some agrarian bluster occurred in 1921 after twelve Grain Growers' candidates were elected to the provincial assembly,²⁸ but nothing notable came of this attempt to win political power.²⁹ By mid-decade a serious rift developed within the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association: the militants, who had no affection for the Liberals, veered leftward into a union with the new and growing United Farmers of Canada. The merger of the farmer groups was renamed the United Farmers of Canada, Saskatchewan Section, whose political progeny would one day be the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. Quebec, British Columbia and the Maritimes also had their revolts in the Twenties as well. All were relatively unsuccessful. The United Farmers of Quebec, organized in 1919, fielded candidates in various provincial elections, but achieved no political success.³⁰ In the 1920 elections in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, seven farmer candidates were elected in each province, the latter group holding the balance of power for the duration of the legislative term, but little more came of their success. Only one "progressive" M.P. ever came out of the Maritimes, he from New Brunswick in the 1921 Federal election.³¹ In British Columbia the farmers sent five "progressive" members to Ottawa in 1921,³² and provincially they succeeded in forcing the Liberal government to pay heed to their demands. Greater things were in store for them: according to Ormsby, from

the ashes of the farmers' movement of British Columbia arose the Social Credit party thirty years later.³³

In Alberta, the United Farmers' Government held power for fourteen years. They successfully combined a non-partisan, experimental and pragmatic "temper" in politics - as W.L. Morton calls it - with a cautious approach to administration. During the latter days of their regime, when the country was wracked with depression, the United Farmers of Alberta was the party that people rejected as unable to cope with the severe problems of the time. Where solutions to some of the problems were apparent - for example, the larger unit as the answer to rural education, - the United Farmers' Government of Alberta was unable to force through the necessary legislation. True to their principles, they obeyed what they took as the voice of the people and made no move. Frantically they attempted to ride over the depression. Unfortunately for them, there was little they could do in Alberta to alleviate the effects of this world wide depression.

But in those fourteen years they had made their mark. In Alberta, the Canadian farmers' movement found its most successful manifestation. There are at least three reasons for this. First, in no other province of Canada was the farmer leadership so alienated from the two-party system. Some Americans, like Henry Wise Wood, had rejected partyism in the United States, and they did not enter it when they came to Alberta. Overtures were made to Henry Wise Wood to join the federal Liberal cabinet but

he refused,³⁴ as he later refused to become premier of the province. Another characteristic of the United Farmers of Alberta leadership was ability - intellectual and otherwise. People in the cabinet like Premier Brownlee, Attorney-General Lymburn, Perren Baker (a farmer with a McMaster B.A. and graduate work), and the aristocratic Irene Parlby of Alix, provided honest and careful administration.

Because of the quality of its leaders, and because of their unwillingness to be assimilated into one of the old parties, the United Farmers of Alberta, like no other farm group in Canada, developed an idealistic ideology which gave it a powerful reason for being. As Morton sees this Alberta phenomenon, it became a "church militant":

...with doctrine, hierarchy and apostles, and to this, as well as to the debtor and agrarian economy in Alberta, is to be ascribed the singular duration and accomplishment of its representation in parliament.³⁵

Finally, part of the success of the United Farmers of Alberta surely can be attributed to the nature of the people in Alberta in the nineteen-twenties. The uniqueness is explained by W.L. Morton in his excellent study The Progressive Party in Canada.³⁶ Alberta, of all the prairie provinces, had the youngest and weakest British-Ontario tradition. This enabled Alberta to shape its own political traditions in the light of its dual British and American strains. This resulted in a movement which was more radical and more dissenting than its counterparts elsewhere, more able to withstand the crippling disintegration which plagued the other farmers' groups in Canada.

As economic conditions worsened, the U.F.A. found themselves faced with the replay of the 1921 match, only with themselves on the opposite side. Having lost the old leader and the old ideology, they had no basis from which to confront the worsening situation. The virile new Social Credit movement, confident in its ability to bring economic salvation, would soon completely obliterate the last vestige of the agrarian revolt in Canada. Morton captures something of the spirit of those days when he writes:

When farm prices ceased to possess economic relevance; when organized society could no longer be maintained out of local resources; when once independent men were reduced in their distress to accepting relief from government...under these conditions men passed beyond persuasion or appeal."³⁷

Mr. Reid, the premier, surveying the debacle, had a message for his beloved movement. He said:

Although defeated, we are not discredited. We leave behind us an unblemished record of fourteen years of good government. The U.F.A. has made this contribution to the province. The life and integrity of the government during those years was preserved by honesty of purpose and high ideals of the movement which gave it birth.³⁸

CHAPTER IV

AGRARIAN IDEOLOGY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION

U.F.A. Educational Activity

Since the U.F.A. was at its inception not a political party, its aims and objectives were somewhat different from those of a partisan political group. The U.F.A., like other Canadian farmers' groups, was organized primarily to secure the welfare of the agricultural community in the country. Along with this primary social aim was the secondary aim of improving the lot of each individual farmer by bettering his life and his work. Education was seen as a means to the fulfilment and betterment of men, so naturally the farmers' movement had a continuing interest in adult and in rural education. Towards this end, the U.F.A. and the U.F.W.A. early established educational committees. The aims of the U.F.A. Educational Committee were set forth in 1921:

(1) To give publicity through the press to the social, economic, educational and political activities of the United Farmers of Alberta.

(2) To carry out systematic research into subjects which concern members of the organization as farmers and citizens.

(3) To present the results of this research, in an uncontroversial spirit, for the consideration of the membership.¹

The Educational Committee of the U.F.A. was very active under the chairmanship of Mr. I.V. Macklin, especially in the conventions of the thirties. At the U.F.A. Convention,

chairmen of the several committees at work through the past year would make a report of their findings, and often present, before the convention, resolutions from their various committees. The chairman and his two committee members working in education made an important report each year.² There are two areas that were of most concern to this committee. First, attempts were made to broaden educational opportunity. In the 1934 Convention, for example, Mr. Macklin's committee recommended that charges for correspondence courses be lowered from \$10.00 to \$2.00 per subject, and the committee also objected to the doubling of the fees for Normal school attendance, a move which had taken place that year.³ Another set of proposals by the Macklin Committee involved the reappraisal of the secondary school curriculum in order to introduce a social science base - especially political science and economics, - and to put less emphasis on "subjects leading to a professional life which so few of the students ever enter and which, if they did, they could easily get when they decide to specialize on that course."⁴ Other important proposed curriculum changes were set forth by this committee.

A "folk school" approach to education was urged year after year by Mr. Macklin, the equivalent committee in the U.F.W.A., and by numerous locals as well.⁵

We recommend also that in our regular educational courses there may be infused, wherever possible, something that will tend to develop in our students a mind that shall look out on its fellows with the thought of mutual helpfulness rather than with the thought of exploitation. We regret that so little has been done along this line in the past while for

over a decade the opportunity for action has been ours...[thus] immediate steps be taken to prepare or secure text books on co-operation for public, high and normal schools in this province...[and] the co-operative philosophy be also embodied in other subjects of our educational course wherein such procedure is possible.⁶

Another important curriculum revision was presented in 1933 by Mr. Macklin. Macklin prefaced his important resolution with this explanation:

No one will deny that co-operation is a higher form of civilization than competition. But for that higher type of civilization we need a high type of citizen. We think that the school can help to develop such a citizen....Can we teach the youth of our land not to look on their followers as so many objects for their exploitations? Can we teach them to regard the world as a brotherhood and their life as an opportunity for service?

Then followed the resolution:

Resolved that ethical instruction be given a place in the curriculum of public and high schools comparable to that given to other branches of learning?⁷

Needless to say, the resolution was passed by the 1933 Convention.

Besides this committee, there were individual U.F.A. members attempting to reform education. William Irvine was one of those most interested in education. In his book, The Farmers in Politics, Irvine devoted several pages to what he called "Education and Life" (pp.38-49). Although education was important to the life of democracy, he pointed out, the present education system was "bankrupt," as can be seen by looking at the sorry state of the teaching profession. The basic cause of this bankruptcy, Irvine felt, was the irrelevance of "institutionalized education"

to the common life of the worker and the farmer. The higher schools, in fact, were reserved almost entirely for the children of the rich. Vocational training must be developed extensively in the schools to make education meaningful for the majority of students. Only such an "education for life" could lead to the development of the whole person through a full expression of the self. And then the ultimate goal, as Irvine proclaimed on page 47, would be the establishment of the new social order.

...based not on fighting but on fraternity; not on the competitive struggles for the means of basic life, but a distribution for the benefit of all who participate by hand or brain; not on the utmost inequality of riches, but on a systematic approach towards a healthy equality of material circumstances for every person born into the world ...[and the] widest participation in power, both economic and political, which is characteristic of democracy.

Even more active in educational principles and policies were the women of the farmers' movement. The Hon. Irene Parlby was an influential advocate of educational change, and wrote and spoke primarily on the subject of education. In the vigorous crusade Mrs. Parlby waged on behalf of education, she advocated a kind of education which she called "creative":

What creative education is trying to do according to those who are carrying it out is to let loose all that tremendous creative power which is to be found in greater or lesser degree in the undercurrent of children's minds....to surround (each child) with such an atmosphere and facilities that will enable him to give full and free play to his own personal interests and hobbies....⁸

In her address to the 1925 U.F.W.A. Convention, Mrs. Parlby introduced the Dalton Laboratory Plan to the as-

sembled women. The Plan "permits children to learn by the scientific method and to investigate and discover for themselves. The plan does not interfere with either curriculum or grouping by grades, although we are told that it does away with most of the drawbacks of grading."⁹ The end of this education is the character development of the child. He becomes a wholesome, charitable and intelligent person.

Mrs. Parlby's second concern was rural education, specifically:

...how to get a type of elementary education in the country which will not necessarily lead the children away from rural life....the desire to make the child master of his environment and of using the environment to help in the development of the child's capacities.¹⁰

In 1928 Mrs. Parlby visited schools in Sweden, Denmark and England in order to try and find the answer to this problem. In Denmark, she found that "while the fundamental school subjects were emphasized in a thorough-going fashion the educators seemed to manage to root the entire course of study to the soil in such a manner that they are able to inculcate in the pupils love of soil tilling as a life calling."¹¹ Her findings in Europe confirmed her conviction that the "folk school" philosophy was necessary for agrarian Alberta if the virtues of the rural way of life were to be preserved. It was this same theme that another prominent woman in the Canadian agrarian movement expressed. Miss. Agnes Macphail, Ontario Member of Parliament, believed that only through education could the

new social order based upon co-operation be established. The rural child should want to stay on the farm; as well, the rural child should have the same opportunity for real education as his city counterpart.

One of the most difficult problems facing civilization today...is to devise some means of inducing the youth, or a portion of the youth, to stay on the land and to make of agriculture a better calling.... [to prepare] the child to function in his present surroundings, always looking towards the improvement of those surroundings....[and to enlarge] the child's vision...¹²

Besides the independent work done by Mrs. Parlby and Miss Macphail there was also a considerable amount of organized promotion on behalf of education. For example, Mary McCallum of Winnipeg, formerly a teacher, but at this time the educational columnist for the Grain Growers' Guide, wrote several articles on the condition of rural education and its improvement. In Alberta, Mrs. Leona R. Barrett, teacher at New Norway, and an active member of the U.F.W.A., wrote a series of articles for The U.F.A. on educational matters. Like her contemporaries in the agrarian movement, Mrs. Barrett was concerned with "imbuing the young with the ideals of peace,"¹³ and spreading the gospel of co-operation:

The spirit of co-operation can be developed and encouraged in the public school, for co-operation in its essence is a thing of the spirit.¹⁴

But the most effective and powerful voice for educational reform in the Alberta farmers' movement was the Educational Committee of the U.F.W.A. Two women played especially significant roles in this committee: Mrs. Winnifred Ross, chairman of this body for at least five

years, and Mrs. R.B. Gunn, also prominent as president of the U.F.W.A. This committee concentrated on various problems each year, such as teacher quality, curriculum, and educational financing, but were always concerned uppermost with the aims of education, the spiritual emphasis, as they thought of it.

When we note the development of the spirit of co-operation and service in the minds of our people, in so short a period of organization, and envision the possibilities of our concerted effort to instil these by precept and example in the minds of the young, we have a glimpse of the contribution our organization has made, and will continue to make, as a permanent, constructive, evolutionary force.¹⁵

During her presidency of the Educational Committee, 1927 and 1928, Mrs. Gunn made an extensive comparative study of educational innovations and experiments in various parts of the world. From the craft schools of Britain to the American Dalton plan, many interesting approaches to education were brought before Alberta women by the energetic Mrs. Gunn. From her extensive investigation, Mrs. Gunn concluded:

We believe our schools are too rigid, with too much routine....Our schools should emphasize training not for examinations, but training for life. And to do this the school must recognize and take into account the child's natural interests and environment.¹⁶

As its responsibility, the U.F.W.A. brought its resolutions on education before the U.F.A. In spite of the efforts of all these groups and individuals, little change was made in the official and determining philosophy of education in the province.

Government Response to U.F.A. Educational Activity

Each year that the farmers' movement controlled the Alberta Government, increasing pressure was brought to bear with the purpose of introducing significant change in the education system consistent with agrarian ideology. There are three reasons why the Farmers' Government did not respond to its Convention and membership to act in accord with the wishes of the movement.

First, there was considerable and powerful opposition against using the schools to inculcate any special kind of agrarian program. During the Liberal regimes, President Tory had blocked the attempts to disperse agricultural training rather than centralize it in the hands of the university. George Gorman, a strong voice in the Department of Education as Chief Inspector and later Deputy Minister, made his position clear:

The farmers of tomorrow must be well informed people if they are to hold the advanced positions taken in fields of social reform, co-operation, marketing and politics. I do not mean that special courses should be supplied for rural pupils, but instructions should certainly relate to everyday experiences of the children, and base its lessons on these. [My emphasis]¹⁷

Mr. Baker, the Minister, supported Mr. Gorman on his stand. It was essential that rural youth have the same opportunity as their urban counterparts. An over-emphasis on special programming for the country boys and girls might limit them in their desire to later follow a professional career. The preservation of the agrarian life, to be the outcome of any special agrarian bias in rural schools, was not crucial with

Mr. Baker. Even during his years in government, the pattern was beginning to appear - the destruction of the small farm unit. Rather than fight the seeming inevitability of this, Mr. Baker took advantage of the agrarian evolution, and eventually amassed nine sections of Southern Alberta farmland for his own farming operation.¹⁸

Accompanying the opposition to any crucial change in curriculum, was the economic catastrophe brought by the depression. Beginning in 1929, the world-wide depression worsened yearly, while the pressure for action upon the government, in education and other areas, increased. But action could not be taken. Mr. Baker writes:

The depression deepened and with the growing distress the popularity of the government throughout the province weakened. Its thought and its energies were fully engaged with marches of the unemployed to the legislature [sic] building, legislation for the protection of debt-ridden farmers threatened with foreclosure, make-work schemes and the distribution of "relief" all over the province. It is small wonder if the problem of survival, both of the Government and of the hard pressed families everywhere, seemed more urgent than the pressing of a rather unpopular educational reform.¹⁹

Finally, Mr. McPherson, tracing the evolution of the U.F.A. Movement in politics, shows how the principle of cabinet domination, at first anathema to the non-partisan progressives, continued to dominate the Alberta political scene. Economic difficulties, continued pressure brought on the Government by disparate pressure groups, and lack of conviction concerning the evils of party politics among the party leadership, including Premier Brownlee,²⁰ led the U.F.A. to give up its principles of government, and eventually

caused the breakdown of the once active and effective constituency organizations.²¹ The will of the Annual Convention soon ceased to be the voice of God for the U.F.A. Government:

The president made it a point never to interfere with or try to impose policy on the cabinet. The convention did not claim the right to impose policy on the cabinet....The cabinet treated the annual set of resolutions brought to it from the convention with considerable freedom.²²

The delegates, once strong and forthright as participants in direct democracy, "were compelled to abandon the position of instructed delegates and to become supporters of the government."²³ By the 1930's many of the dogmatic and zealous agrarians must have been completely disenchanted with the entrenched conservatism of the farmer government. A large segment of the U.F.A. movement had veered in a leftward direction politically, and this vociferous element, before at least two conventions, criticized Mr. Baker and his Department for their unwillingness to introduce anti-capitalistic textbooks.²⁴ Once again the U.F.A. was pragmatic and moderate, and refused to obey the wishes of the movement.

Agrarian Principles and Educational Policy

During the fourteen years that the U.F.A. government held power in Alberta, considerable educational change came about. Looking back, and knowing the economic, political and ideological realities, it is difficult to determine which aspects of policy were enacted because of the ideological stance of the farmers' government, and which were enacted merely as the most feasible move to make at the time, regard-

less of the ideological ramifications. Nevertheless, much of the action undertaken in education by the Farmer Government shows some relationship to certain principles held by the agrarian-progressive groups in the west. In the remaining pages of this Chapter four main principles or tenets of the agrarian progressivist movement of the 1920's will be examined in the context of educational policies of the U.F.A. Government.

Perhaps the foremost principle espoused by the U.F.A. was the belief in the importance of group organization and co-operation. This principle was kept before the people of Alberta by Henry Wise Wood, president of the U.F.A.

That co-operation was the true constructive social law was very manifest. Individuals, as such, could not build social structure, but must be mobilized into higher units; and for that organization of the industrial classes was not only the most logical, but the only possible basis.²⁵

It was this theme of co-operation which so concerned the various conventions and educational committees. At many of the conventions, resolutions were presented by committees, locals and individuals urging the government to promote the philosophy of co-operation in the studies and textbooks of the schools. At the Annual Convention in 1927, the following resolution was presented and carried:

Be it resolved that we ask the Provincial Government to appoint a committee representative of the various groups involved to draw up a course of studies on the principles of co-operation for use in our public schools.²⁶

The following year, replying to the convention on the need for text-books stressing co-operation, Mr. Baker

indicated that "co-operative methods of marketing would be dealt with in the new text-book on civics, and that in the new addition of the economics text-book, the whole subject would be dealt with."²⁷ This, of course, was not enough to satisfy the more fervent believers in the virtues of agrarian ideology. One positive step taken by the provincial government in promoting the philosophy of co-operation was their establishment of the Institute of Co-operation. This Institute, organized and promoted by the Department of Agriculture, was a form of adult education held in conjunction with the several agricultural colleges to promulgate "sound principles of co-operation."²⁸ There was, of course, widespread interest in adult education at that time, especially patterned on the Scandinavian model. R.S. Patterson writes:

Extension lectures, short courses, cultural programs, travelling libraries and radio instruction were all seen as part of the contemporary provisions. Interest tended to centre on a unique approach to adult education found in Scandinavia...."²⁹

Other than these moves, very little effort was expended to promote co-operation as a subject for study in the schools.

There were several curricular revisions during the 1921-1935 period. Both Walker and Patterson in their theses³⁰ claim that there was an impact made by the U.F.A. on curriculum revision when "representatives from various industrial and professional groups were included in the deliberations about curriculum."³¹ This new approach was first taken in the 1921 Curriculum revision. This revision lightened the subject load to be carried, introduced the unit system

in place of whole-grade pass or fail, and opened up the curriculum for a variety of patterns, though the last opportunity was neglected due to community apathy. But it is doubtful whether the content or direction of new curriculum can be credited only to the government. The government officials in the Department of Education have always been strong men, and 1921 to 1935 was certainly no exception. Much initiative came from them for changes in the curriculum.

A second main principle of the U.F.A. movement was the belief that power in the state should be decentralized in the hands of the citizen. William Irvine, who saw a desperate need for education in a true democracy, wrote:

Like life blood in the veins which courses through the whole [political] organism, democracy, if adopted, must permeate the whole system of society. It cannot be shut off at the ballot box, or limited to a recognized right of the people to organize. If we commit ourselves to the democratic principle, there must be no isolating it, no restricting it within bounds, no field in which it will be trespasser; it must spread everywhere.³²

Politically, the belief led to such policies as the legislator functioning as delegate, and the use of referendum and recall. In educational matters, the administration of rural education by the local board should have been the ideal pattern in keeping with the belief in direct democracy. In practice, the government had to face reality: the small one-room school was unable to provide rural youth with a post-elementary education equal to urban youth. Therefore, it was necessary to plan for enlarging the school administrative unit. But at no time did the minister, Mr. Baker, plan to destroy the locally administered school. He did want to bring to Alberta

farm youth the best of both worlds, as federal School Inspector J.H. Putman recognized:

...it seems to me your plan [for the larger administrative unit] ought to work out well. You are leaving local school districts and preserving local sentiment and attachment for the school, but in a big way you are centralizing the real work of education in the hands of experts. It seems to me you have hit upon a compromise that ought to work well.³³

Here then were two opposing principles at work: decentralized administration versus equality of opportunity in education. Mr. Baker and the government chose to promote the latter. Not everyone in the farmers' movement was satisfied with this choice. Many members believed that the rural school, under closer supervision, could provide adequate schooling for the rural children. In her education report of 1932, Mrs. Winnifred Ross brought the Kindersley plan before the delegates. The Anderson Government of Saskatchewan was experimenting with a new pattern of supervision in the Kindersley area. A supervisor has been appointed to work within an area one third the size of a normal inspectorate. In this smaller area he serves, not as an inspector, but as a supervisory teacher or principal. Such a highly trained person could do much to raise the efficiency of the many schools under his charge by keeping his teachers up-to-date on new methods and procedures.³⁴ But generally, the bulk of the farmers saw the necessity of larger administrative units, at least at the secondary level. Ironically, the government never felt confident enough to introduce the plan. Mr. Baker believes that it was the "extreme devotion to the ideal of 'grass roots democracy,'" characteristic of his

movement, which finally did block the measure. Further east, the Manitoba government had provided enabling legislation for the establishment of municipal school districts. Mary McCallum and the Grain Growers' Guide threw their weight fully behind these moves towards centralization in Manitoba.³⁵ It was, then, the desire to equalize opportunity which came to dominate the thinking and planning of Agrarian groups in Canada, and displaced the principle of grass roots control in the political aim of the Agrarian movement.

The belief in equity - as blazoned in the motto of the U.F.A. - was a third governing principle of Alberta's organized farmers. As Professor Patterson points out:

The progressives were seeking a society where all people would have the advantage commensurate with their position as a member of that society. They wanted democratic principles to be applied as fully as possible.³⁶

The Grain Growers' Guide expressed this principle in its political context:

The process of political equalization which is now at work in Canada, means the displacement from power of a self-seeking, special privileged junta of financial and industrial barons, who as a result of long indulgence in power, have assumed that it would be impossible for a farmer or any other ordinary person to engage in public affairs.³⁷

The Alberta group was more moderate than this. In education, they made certain moves to extend the base of opportunity in the province. One important series of changes brought about was the reforming of various curricula to make it possible for more young people to succeed in their higher schooling. Dr. B.E. Walker, in his study on school curriculum and organization during this period, records that there was a

'lightening of the high school program to make it more useful to the increasing number of youths enrolled in the high schools."³⁸ The introduction of the unit system in 1921 would be one encouragement for students to remain in school; introducing additional kinds of programs of a non-academic nature - such as technical, agricultural and commercial - would be another. As in earlier years, there was little effort to break away from the established academic pattern.

Very few communities took advantage of the invitation to organize optional courses of special local interest. The prestige of the programs prepared by the central government was so great that local authorities were reluctant to prepare their own programs.³⁹

Attempts were made to provide opportunity for rural youth at the post-secondary level as well. One such proposal was presented in 1928 by Hon. George Hoadley, one time Minister of Health. The Minister claimed that too many country girls were debarred from a career in nursing because of the high educational standard and the length of the training course. He therefore urged the revision of the program: there should be "a radical reduction in the qualification of nurses, a shortening of the training period from three to two years, and a lowering of the educational requirement necessary for admission to the course...."⁴⁰ The public outcry against this measure blocked its enactment. The university did not fail to come under scrutiny either. Several Annual Conventions passed resolutions urging that the language requirement (Latin, Greek) for the B.A. be made optional. I.V. Macklin, chairman of the important Education Committee, threw his weight behind this proposal. What is

studied in the universities has a tremendous effect on the programs of the lower schools, he maintained, so the university curriculum must also reflect the belief in "education for public as well as private profit."⁴¹

Practically everything of value...has been translated into English. However, if those who would be doctors, lawyers, or preachers wish to have the fun of digging into the original languages, we have no quarrel with them, but let us consider the rank and file of our sons and daughters who may take a high school and possibly a university course with no such aim in view. If the principle of 'the greatest good to the greatest number' is a sound principle, then let the principle assist us in shaping our courses of study.⁴²

Needless to say, nothing came of this proposal at the time.

Equal opportunity is meaningless unless there are financial resources to make such opportunity a reality. Generally, the years that the U.F.A. held power in Alberta were difficult, economically speaking, so many of the hopes and dreams of the agrarian reformers were necessarily frustrated.⁴³ During the thirties, of course, conditions reached the point of desperation: I.V. Macklin, the radical farmer from Grande Prairie, went so far as to recommend the use of "scrip" in connection with provincial finances.⁴⁴ But certain action was taken, and several courses of action were recommended (by the Annual Convention) and not taken. Surely one of the most significant pieces of legislation during this period was the proposal for the "blanket tax" in 1926. The editor of The A.T.A. Magazine was high in praise of Mr. Baker's scheme:

The Minister made a real attempt to grapple with what is now recognized to be the greatest problem facing the Alberta legislature today, that of providing for a true democracy whereby every person may have an opportunity to make the best of himself and the greatest possible number availing themselves of the opportunity....The Minister's plan pointed the way to a fine

idealism for the strong and rich to give a real helping hand to the poor and weak...."45

By this plan, there would be one taxing unit in the province and an equalized tax mill rate - three mills was estimated - throughout the whole province. The huge central fund for grants would then distribute grants according to a standard criteria - for example, pupils in attendance, school rooms operating and number of days school has operated. Mr. Baker's proposal came under severe criticism from the Trustees' Association, and he was forced to seek a compromise. The substitute scheme made provision for additional grants to be paid to those school districts with a low assessed valuation on property. The compromise would be of some help, but nothing near what might have been done for rural education if the original proposal had been legislated.

The Blanket Tax has been abandoned and the wealthy school districts may chuckle at their success in defeating the scheme; but the fact remains that the Minister made a real effort to put into effect a plan of equalizing the burden of educating our young citizens - a plan in full keeping with those advanced by all who have studied seriously the question of taxation for education.⁴⁶

Meanwhile, the U.F.A. in their Annual Convention was attempting to push equalization even further, though largely unsuccessful in their attempts. The Convention, in 1929, urged that the charge for writing departmental examinations should be dropped. They tried again a year later - in 1930 they resolved to ask the government to at least lower the fee. In 1934 the Annual Convention, to no avail, opposed the rising of the Normal School fees from \$50.00 to \$100.00, and recommended that fees for correspondence courses should

be lowered from \$10.00 to \$2.00.⁴⁷

If the U.F.A. Government met with little success in providing economic assistance for furthering equal opportunity, they can be credited with providing some new avenues of opportunity. Perhaps most significant was the commencement, in 1923, of correspondence courses for pre-secondary students located in isolated areas. The U.F.W.A. under president Mrs. Amy Warr, waged a propaganda battle to have these courses extended into the secondary grades as well. They met success, for by 1934 high school students were enjoying the benefits of a high school education through correspondence courses. The Department of Education also gave considerable assistance and encouragement to the Institute of Technology opened by Perren Baker shortly after accepting the education portfolio.

This enterprise [establishment of the Institute] had been planned by the previous administration and the construction of the building was well under way when we took office. The organization of the school was, however, entirely our work and under the enthusiastic leadership of Dr. W.G. Carpenter, whom I stole from the position of Superintendent of schools in Edmonton, the Institute was, from the start, a valuable addition to the educational system of Alberta.⁴⁸

The government was unable to proceed very far in providing equal opportunity. At all times the cabinet acted in a pragmatic and conservative fashion, and was not tempted to major reform by the idealists within the movement. Mr. Baker himself rested his hopes in his plan for the larger unit. This, he believed, would be the key to a brighter future for rural education in the province.

A fourth principle held by the farmers in Alberta

and elsewhere was one which often went unmentioned, but was significant in deciding policy decisions. This was the belief that there was a unique kind of value or virtue connected with the agrarian way of life. Mrs. Parlby expressed it like this:

I am an enthusiast for the country. It is the place where God meant people to live, and particularly where they should bring up their children.⁴⁹

W.E. Mann has captured the essence of the revolt against the established churches in the West which also throws light on the broader agrarian revolt:

While the main [religious] domination began to align themselves with the rising middle classes, evangelical sects came to defend some of the interests of the lower class groups. On the whole, the fundamentalist movement represented a reactionary and decentralizing movement in Alberta's community life. It constituted a reaction against the forces of urbanism, cultural maturity, and centralization both economic and religious, and a defense of past traditions and mores, of the rural against the urban.

[These groups were an attempt] to freeze certain traditional religious values and meanings within a thoroughly rural ideology and hence defend the province's slowly retreating rural society.⁵⁰

This belief in agrarianism as a worthwhile way of life was likely an outgrowth and product of the Western frontier tradition,⁵¹ and the consciousness of this life was much a part of the more idealistic farmers in the U.F.A. It was also the farmer who was in a position to take the next step in the social evolution of man.

The construction of a new social order has a better chance of being worked out by agriculturalists than by any other group in Canada....the future of Canada, the building of a better Canada, rests almost ...in the hands of the agriculturalists of the Dominion.⁵²

It was thus imperative that all effort be put into using all

available means for bringing in this new social order. Education, of course, would be the key. This explains the pressure that the movement persistently exerted on the government to introduce the "folk school movement," have the principles of co-operation taught as a regular course of studies, and make "agriculture" an equal subject in the country schools of the province. For example, the Edgerton local of the U.F.A. submitted the following resolution to the 1921 Annual Convention:

Therefore be it resolved that the United Farmers of Alberta in convention assembled declare itself as favouring...a revision of the high school curriculum, introducing an agricultural course similar to that of agricultural colleges so that rural pupils may have the option of taking such a course as well as a science course, or courses in language...⁵³

The government of the province, in spite of the pressure brought to bear, refused to succumb to the demands of the idealist wing in the movement. If "co-operation" was to be studied, it would be done as part of the larger disciplines of civic and political science. Mr. Baker, himself, did not speak of education in terms of an agrarian bias. The improvement of rural education had an important end apart from ideology:

I want the people on the land to have a better life and, especially, that horizons should be broadened and intellectual life enriched; and this could come only through better education.⁵⁴

Still, Mr. Baker was unwilling to support a wholesale movement of farm youth to the city, unless remaining in the country would deny the young person a suitable education. Before the 1922 Teachers' Convention, Hon. Perren Baker appealed to the

teaching force:

...do not teach these boys and girls that they must get off the farm and get an occupation that amounts to something. Show them that life right there, doing the world's common work, may be as noble as in the most strenuous places. Do not teach them that to get into some profession that removes them from the necessity of doing part of the world's hard, rough, dirty work is the way to greatness and the way to success.⁵⁵

Once again pragmatism proved to be the ruling principle of this United Farmer Government. It must have been in desperation and with disgust that much of the membership of the U.F.A. turned from support of the government which had once held out such hope for the agrarian reformers of the West.

CHAPTER V

PERREN E. BAKER, MINISTER OF EDUCATION

The Preparation of a Crown Minister, 1877 - 1921.

Perren Earle Baker became Alberta's fifth Minister of Education at forty-four years of age. He is remembered by those who knew him well as a capable and dedicated member of the U.F.A. cabinet and Government. His colleague, former Attorney-General Lymburn, has this to say of his fellow minister:

I found Mr. Baker to be a man with a very good grasp of what was involved in being the Minister of Education of the Province....The fact that Mr. Baker was appointed Minister of Education when the U.F.A. Government was elected in 1921 and continued in that office until the advent of Social Credit in 1935 speaks for itself.¹

As a person, Mr. Lymburn saw Perren Baker as a "friendly man...at all times accessible to anyone seeking information or help in connection with his Department."² Mr. and Mrs. Ernie Cook were both teachers and U.F.A. members during the years of the U.F.A. Government. This is how Mrs. Cook remembers the Minister:

...tall, handsome, dignified and most conservative. . . Also he was very reserved and rather uncommunicative.³

Another local leader of the U.F.A. movement in Alberta, who was raised in the same locality as Mr. Baker and knew him through the years, recalls the Minister as "a warm personality but ultra-conservative," and an efficient Minister of Ed-

ucation during that difficult period.⁴ Somewhat more critical, Dr. Chester Ronning, from 1932 to 1935 the U.F.A. Member of the Legislature for Camrose, remembers Mr. Baker as affable, but somewhat uninspiring and unimaginative."⁵ Many saw Perren Baker as a conservative force within the U.F.A. Government. On the other hand, Mr. Baker saw himself, and continues to see himself, as "a peaceful rebel and protester against what is today called the establishment."⁶

As a boy in Blenheim, Ontario, the young Perren Baker had no idea of the excitement and challenge that the future held in store for him. Born into a Baptist Minister's home in 1877, it was taken for granted that he would follow his father in the honorable vocation. Such was not to be the case. While still very young, Perren's mother died, and this seems to have had a distrubing effect on his life. Earlier than most young men at that time, he began to have serious problems with his religious faith, and found it difficult to accept, without question, the "established truth." Nevertheless he continued in pursuit of a theological training, obtaining in 1900 his Baccalaureate in Arts from McMaster University, a prestigious Baptist institution. He tried the pulpit, but was not satisfied. Then, after a winter session of graduate studies in theology at Chicago, marriage to the girl back home, Blanche Randall, and another attempt at the ministry, Perren made the decision to begin again. Fortunately, he had an uncle living in far-off Calgary, and promotional literature concerning the West had attracted his attention as well. Thus in 1910, Perren Baker sunk down his

roots "in a remote corner of the province within sight of the Sweet-Grass Hills of Montana and fully occupied [himself] in trying to make a farm out of the raw prairie."⁷ Mr. Baker, though ignorant of what farming was all about, applied his strength and enthusiasm to making a success of his new vocation. His success is marked by the eventual size and significance of his farming operation - nine sections of land at Nemiskamin.

From his arrival, Mr. Baker was concerned about improving the life of the farm population. He became a member of the fledgling U.F.A. group in his district, Altorado, and was the first president of the group.⁸ The local was a busy one, and conscientiously took up the task of adult education. A popular activity was the debate. Mr. Baker records this entry in his diary of January 31, 1912:

(U.F.A. at Doondale) Duncan being called away sent his manuscript [re debate on Direct Legislation] - a strange mixture of flashes of insight and fogging of the issue. The next meeting a debate: Resolved that Canada should maintain a navy of her own. I am to lead the negative. A little thought on this question will help to confirm or to destroy my prejudice against naval and military expenditures.⁹

Perren Baker was soon recognized as a leader of the farmers in his area of the province. Many of his compatriots believed him to be the right man to contest the important 1921 by-election in the Medicine Hat federal constituency. Perren allowed his name to go before the nominating convention, but Robert Gardiner won the convention, and went on to make history by sweeping the constituency on behalf of the organized farmers.¹⁰ This win encouraged the U.F.A. locals, wakening

to the need for political action.

That same year, the farmers came to power in Alberta. Perren Baker won an easy election in his provincial constituency of Medicine Hat. The new member recognized that he would likely be asked to fill a cabinet position, for few of his fellow members possessed his educational qualifications. He was interested in the education portfolio. His service on the local school board in his own area might have given him this keen interest in education;¹¹ or perhaps he felt that the problems in rural education needed tackling by someone with ability and drive.

...two experiences led me [Mr. Baker] to believe that some improvement might be made in its [the Department of Education] operation. The first had occurred about eight years earlier when out of the blue I got a letter from the Department stating that I was reported to have a child of school age who was not attending school and that if I did not immediately end this delinquency the arm of the law would be invoked. The child had barely turned six; the school was three miles away and the snow lay on the ground.

I was so outraged at the presumptory tone of the letter, that in my indignation I immediately replied that I did not need to be taught the importance of education, and that I would certainly see that my boy got a better one than had apparently been enjoyed by the writer of the departmental letter.¹²

Mr. Baker's second experience with education and educators was a chance meeting with a school inspector on a train:

My memory is that the talk was mainly about himself and the impression made on me was quite unfavourable and that this was not at all the type of man who should be a school inspector. I am glad to say that he was no fair representative of the inspection staff, but at the time the selection of a Minister of Education was an issue. I had met no other, and perhaps this earlier impression had something to do with my desire to go to the Department of Education where I felt there could be improvement.¹³

Shortly after the election, the newly-elected members met in Calgary to choose a party leader. After the important meeting terminated which saw Herbert Greenfield selected as the first premier of the U.F.A. Government, Perren Baker had a casual conversation with President Henry Wise Wood:

I had told Mr. Wood that I would like to be Minister of Education. He merely smiled and said, "Well, you have my permission."

I had no sooner reached home, however, than I got a request from Mr. Greenfield to return at once to Calgary. There he offered me the portfolio which I accepted with satisfaction. I wanted it.¹⁴

Some Educational Views of a Crown Minister

Perren Baker did not approach the new portfolio from any strict agrarian bias. Seldom does he mention the possibility or need for a unique rural education, or the desirability of having schools promote the principles of the agrarian and progressive movement.¹⁵ Instead, he saw the need for one kind of education for all young people of the province. This education should produce a man able to live a full and satisfying life.

To put it more definitely, food, clothing, shelter, however indispensable, are the means; the life itself is the thing. The means may be possessed in abundance, even to the point of luxury, and the life remain a poor contemptible thing....in the end he [the educated man] should stand forth a splendid individual, his power of body and mind fully developed, his character sound and noble....¹⁶

This is the goal, an end still beyond the reach of the citizens of the province, for "a greater degree of prosperity must come before life on the farms of Alberta can be what it should be."¹⁷ This kind of education - forming the

virtuous man - is an expression of traditional humanistic educational philosophy, not necessarily the agrarian ideology. Put into practice, this humanistic education should provide:

...such broad general training as will help them [the youth] to make a suitable choice of life work, enable them to improve in it, and admit of happy and useful employment of leisure time. With this broader training we can expect that they will ultimately "find" themselves and make new and necessary adjustments when new situations arise, and this unquestionably is the kind of education and equipment which is of primary importance in an age when social and economic change is in evidence.¹⁸

This is, Mr. Baker believed, the one kind of education tenable in the twentieth century. Attempts to preserve a rural "way of life" were not fostered nor supported by the Minister. It was, in fact, during Mr. Baker's ministry that an attempt was made to close the Camrose Normal School, since Mr. Baker did not see any relevance in a special training for rural teachers either.

I took a different view of the soundness of his [G.P. Smith's] choice, and believing that a year spent amid the advantages offered by a capital city and proximity to a university would be more helpful to our budding teachers than a year spent in a small town, especially since so many of them came from the country...¹⁹

What is vital to education for all youth, Mr. Baker believed, is that they may be initiated into the fullness of the human experience, regardless of their fathers' background or vocation. The teacher for this task is not necessarily the rural trained or urban trained teacher; rather, he or she is a special sort of person.

I am thinking of the teacher who has sensed the depth of the human soul; I am thinking of the teacher who has sensed something of the immensity and mystery

of life, and who is able to breathe to the child some sense of this great wonderful world; some sense of the fact that in books he may come close to the world of men who have reached out to the great things of life; that within the covers of a book he may find records of the most intense interest, human records showing to what the human soul has aspired; and has awakened the child to an appreciation of the fact that books open up to him a great world. That teacher has done a great thing for the pupil.²⁰

The Career of a Crown Minister, 1921-1935

Perren Earle Baker came to the education portfolio cognizant of the problems confronting a new minister in 1921:

...it was with a profound feeling that the general level of education in Alberta was deplorably low and that the chief deficiency in our school system was its failure to meet the needs of the rural area. Just how deficient it was I was to realize only after a study of the statistics of the Department. These revealed the sad fact that hundreds of schools were operating far less than the minimum 160 days and a great many children were reaching the age of fifteen and quitting school without finishing Grade VIII. Of course, the education of the children of the cities, towns and villages was of no less importance and I did not undervalue the work that the University was doing. I felt, however, that in the urban centres every child had the opportunity for an education....I felt, therefore, that the most pressing need was in the field of rural education.²¹

To cope with this situation, Mr. Baker determined to actualize the slogan of his administration, "Grade VIII for every Alberta pupil," at that time and place "a goal of no mean magnitude."²² Immediately he came up against the financial realities of the province, especially the realization that the seeming war-time prosperity had been short-lived and artificial.²³ The financial exigencies of the nineteen-twenties only increased the widespread opposition to ad-

ditional provisions for secondary education throughout the province. In their 1922 report to the Department of Education, the two high school inspectors, Smith and McKee, wrote:

In some centres the provision of free education beyond grade VIII is being seriously questioned, and the claim is made that the State and the ratepayer in general have done their duty when they have provided free educational facilities to the end of the so-called Public School Course.²⁴

That year, 1922, was marked by a series of economic difficulties: agricultural prices fell, crops in Southern Alberta failed. American markets closed to Alberta cattle, labour trouble was predominant, and three million dollars had to be advanced to provide relief to the needy.²⁵ Although the economic situation was bleak, Mr. Baker had the Legislature approve an additional grant of fifty cents a day to rural schools attempting work beyond grade VIII. Needless to say, there was an increase of 33 1/3% in the numbers attending post-grade VIII for that year.²⁶ The following year, "ushered in at a time when pessimism was prevalent amongst all classes of society,"²⁷ was the low point in the educational record of the U.F.A. Government. Grants to schools and the university were reduced, the school inspection staff was reduced from 39 to 14, Edmonton Normal closed, as did two agricultural colleges, loans to teacher trainees were reduced and the free Summer School for teachers was discontinued.²⁸ Grimly, Premier Greenfield preached the benefits of less paternalism by government.

The difficult times did not prevent the Department

of Education from working on various revisions of curriculum. The revisions at the secondary level were designed to provide the kind of secondary school program which would be meaningful to a wider array of young people. The success of these revisions was indicated by the increasing numbers of youth remaining in school beyond grade VIII. By the mid-twenties, the teacher shortage was less serious, and many outlying areas could now afford a trained teacher because of the extra financial help from the Equalization Grant of 1926. The Minister was also encouraged by the growing demand for secondary schooling and the awakening interest in technical education. As well, the economic forecast was less gloomy during the latter part of the decade:

Crops were good and fair prices prevailed. This situation resulted in the organization, administration and financing of [additional] schools [four rural high schools were organized this year, 1927].²⁹

There was an air of optimism in education as the Thirties began. By 1930, a total of sixteen rural high school districts had been organized throughout the province, and there was a great demand, by the public, for information regarding the establishment of such schools. Extending educational opportunity within its confines, Calgary had opened a new technical high school the year before, and the school was now operating efficiently. For the first time in the province's history, the supply of high school teachers was equal to the demand, and the new School of Education on the university campus graduated seven young teachers that

year.³⁰ This optimism was short-lived, for the next year saw a different tone in the Deputy's report:

The problem of financing the operation of schools, which became acute at the commencement of 1931, continued without relief throughout the year, and has contributed the gravest problem with which the Department has had to deal.³¹

As the depression made its impact felt on the Prairies, the curtailment in expenditures began which led to frustration and unhappiness among those with a concern for education. The teachers were among the hardest hit. Dr. Chalmers captures something of the teachers' conditions for this whole era when he writes:

Nor did they [the teachers] enjoy any fringe benefits to protect them from the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune....Competition for unqualified (and low-cost) personnel was an ever present threatSalaries were determined by individual negotiation between the hard-nosed trustee, on the one hand, and the often immature and inexperienced teacher, on the other....Outside of the cities, qualifications and experience were considered immaterial.³²

Before the U.F.A. Government had come to power, the minimum salary for teachers in the province had been set at \$840.00 per annum. Since its formation in 1916, the Alberta Teachers' Alliance had attempted to persuade the government to increase the minimum salary to at least \$1200.00 yearly. The Alliance had been unsuccessful in getting this legislation enacted, but, even without this, salaries had been increasing yearly.³³ The onslaught of the depression changed this encouraging trend, for, according to Dr. Chalmers, the U.F.A. government was willing "to grant exceptions to school districts from paying the \$840.00 minimum. In fact, so widespread did the practice become of paying \$700.00, that many school boards

assumed such exemptions were automatic and did not even go through the formality of requesting the necessary permission from the Minister of Education."³⁴ Those school boards too timorous to defy the legislation, found means to break the spirit, if not the letter of the law:

Teachers were required to perform janitorial tasks, to rebate part of their salary to the board or to pay high rent for teacherages. The oversupply of teachers often left them no alternative if they wished to have a job.³⁵

The negligence of Mr. Baker and his Department on this issue is blatant unless one understands more of the background. Dr. W.H. Swift was a young school inspector during this period. His statement gives perspective to this particular problem:

During the depression school districts by the hundreds were unable to collect taxes and their financial situations became desperate. The provincial treasury was no better off as revenues dried up. There was also a great surplus of teachers as the normal removals from the profession ceased in order to maintain some income. Enrolments at the Normal Schools increased as young people flocked there, other avenues of employment or of education not being available to them. The law also provided that the Minister could authorize a school board to pay less than the minimum salary if circumstances warranted it. Having regard to the plight of their ratepayers, the states of their treasuries, and the abundance of teachers ready and willing to teach at any price, it was only natural that school boards... should seek to engage teachers at what seemed to them good wages under the circumstances.

At this time I was a very young Inspector of Schools in a largely poverty stricken area, the dismal state of so much of the population being apparently beyond the comprehension of persons of succeeding generations.³⁶

In spite of these dismal conditions, Dr. Swift writes this of Mr. Baker's concern and action:

...I do know that the Minister and Department made valiant attempts to uphold the minimum but it became practically, politically, and I think reasonably, impossible....The political and economic pressures were completely beyond the capacity of any Minister or Government to retain office if he or it had attempted to be completely adamant. In fact there were extremely strong pressures to exorcize the offending legislation as the school boards saw it, altogether. In my opinion, Mr. Baker exercised great courage in standing his ground as well as he did. Had he not done so the salaries would have fallen much lower than they did.³⁷

Surely this curtailment was unavoidable as were most of the other cut-backs. The Department, for example, found it necessary to abolish its grants which had been provided for small schools doing some secondary work. Then the grant structure was again reset to fix a maximum grant of \$500.00 for the small school districts. Another economic measure was to discontinue the government loans to teacher trainees³⁸ and to double the tuition cost to \$100.00 for one term. This move was made possible because of a surplus in the teaching force.³⁹ Finally, there was considerable outcry from the organized farmers of the province when government grants to school fairs ceased in 1933. The school fair had for years been a means of promoting rural arts and crafts, physical development and solidarity, all consistent with the aims and objectives of agrarian ideology.

Not all, though, was bleak. Chester Ronning of Camrose presented a private member's bill to become, hopefully, "The Teachers' Profession Act." The teeth of the bill were drawn, compulsory membership and centralized fees collection, but at least a beginning of professional recognition had taken place.⁴⁰ Another good sign was organization

of a Committee of the Legislature, under Perren Baker, to investigate the scope of rural education in the province. Although the report was issued after the defeat of the U.F.A., its completion can be credited to men such as backbenchers Isidore Goresky, Chester Ronning and C.L. Gibbs, who were active in the work of this committee. Finally, it was in the dying days of the Farmer Administration, that an important report on elementary curriculum was presented. The sub-committee on the elementary curriculum - Donalda Dickie, Olive Fisher and Inspector W.E. Hay - recommended the "enterprise" program for the elementary schools of Alberta. This report was given the backing of the Department of Education under Mr. Baker. G.W. Gorman, the new Deputy Minister, had set forth his faith in the "new education" in his first report of the Department of Education's work:

Education is not a means of livelihood - it is a means of life. Our objectives have possibly been based too much upon the need for obtaining a living. The result is that many who have failed even to make a living may endure as well a mentally starved existence.

Education is not a forced growth in the classroom period of childhood, but is rather a self-developing process, a living of life in wholesomeness and fullness, and the process is continuous and lifelong....Education is thus not merely a matter of school years; it is a life process.⁴¹

Mr. Gorman was not only reflecting the views of his Minister; he was also setting the tone for the introduction of "progressive" methods in education into Alberta.

Perren Baker and the Alberta Teachers' Alliance

Few men have come to public office carrying the hopes and aspirations of so many people as did Perren Baker. The Teachers' Alliance, bloody but unbeaten from its three-year struggle with the School Trustees' and George Peter Smith, looked with confidence towards the new Government. It was, after all, the farmers' movement which believed in the organization of occupational groups and the co-operation among such groups in solving communal problems. Naturally, teachers assumed that such a progressive movement would be friendly towards them.⁴² D.A. McKerricher, writing in The A.T.A. Magazine after Mr. Baker's appointment, welcomed the new Minister, a long-time friend, and wrote of Mr. Baker's qualifications for office:

The new minister believes in organization on the part of every group, not for the purpose of fighting other groups, but rather for the purpose of making the individual effective as a social force....He is, therefore, in sympathy with the Teachers' Alliance and is not only prepared to listen to the representations of the teachers through their organization but welcomes the fullest and freest expression of their views.

To the discharge of his duties as Minister of Education, Hon. Perren Baker brings a well disciplined mind, a kindly feeling toward the teaching profession, a willingness to receive suggestion, a real appreciation of the importance of education as the instrument for preparing an aggressive democracy for intelligent self-government, and an earnest desire to carry on his work with the good will and friendly co-operation of all who are associated with him.

The teachers of Alberta welcome their new chief ...and look forward, under his administration, to an era of progress.⁴³

"Buoyed with hope," as Dr. Chalmers writes, the A.T.A. lost no time approaching the new Minister with

their demands, the most important of which were the tenure and contract requests.⁴⁴ Mr. Baker, like his predecessors, was anxious to improve the lot of the teacher while still placating the powerful Trustees' Association. He expended effort to bring the A.T.A. and the A.S.T.A.⁴⁵ to a compromise on the tenure and contracts issues, and when his efforts failed, he took the initiative and presented a compromise himself. Such was the case in 1923 when Mr. Baker presented a new contract form. The contract provided the first definite protection for the teaching force: a hearing must be held before a teacher could be dismissed, two days notice of such a hearing must be given (rather than the five requested by the A.T.A.), but no representative for the dismissed teacher could be present. Naturally, the A.T.A. were disappointed with this new contract, as they also were with the new Board of Reference established in 1926. The new Board, replacing the Board of Conciliation, fell heir to the problems of its predecessor:

...later developments showed that the Board of Reference could not actually provide the protection which the teachers needed. In over half the cases heard in the succeeding four years, the Board found in favour of the teacher, but there is no record that anything was done by either the school boards or the Minister to reinstate the teacher concerned. The Board's value to teachers appears to have been that the public hearing could absolve the teachers of any fault and thus protect his professional reputation.⁴⁶

In the mind of Perren Baker, these various changes were merely stopgap measures to appease the teachers. With the introduction of the larger unit of school administration, most of these problems would work themselves out. Confident

in the wisdom of his Baker Bill, the Minister was reticent to undergo reforms that would soon prove unnecessary. With the frustration of his hopes to implement his scheme, Mr. Baker allowed some legislation to be enacted to further protect the teaching force. In the new School Act of 1931, changes governing teachers' contracts were legislated:

The new legislation prevented the school board from giving notice of dismissal (usually 30 days had been required) other than in July, except with permission of a school inspector, or a teacher from resigning other than in June or July, except with similar permission.⁴⁷

Another move made one year later, amended the School Act to increase the power of the Board of Reference:

The Board was required to disallow the termination [of the teacher's contract] if satisfied that the agreement was not terminated because of the misconduct or inefficiency of the teacher, or because of personal qualities detrimental to the proper conduct of the school, or because of the financial conditions of the district, or for the welfare of the district. In addition, the legislation provided that the termination of agreement would be suspended until the report of the Board of Reference was in the hands of the parties involved.⁴⁸

The Minister and his Department, under fire from all sides, allowed the Board of Reference to lapse into disuse throughout their final year in power, in spite of the legislation passed earlier.⁴⁹ The U.F.A. Government was unable to act soon enough and decisively enough to win the support of the organized teachers of Alberta.

Just how alienated Mr. Baker was from the A.T.A. is shown by the editorial appearing in the official publication of that organization, The A.T.A. Magazine, after the defeat of the Farmer government:

It would be hypocrisy to infer otherwise than that the teachers of Alberta have longed for a change of - shall we say "weather": that long ago they arrived at the conviction that, generally speaking, the personnel of the last Legislature lacked sound vision in education and were without sound leadership and forceful direction, or alternately, that the general following of the various party leaders were incapable of viewing our school system otherwise than as a first-class vote-catching device....[and] with few exceptions the members acted on the assumption that educational reform is a first-class vote-losing proposition and therefore should be left religiously alone.⁵⁰

How bitter the fruits of political life: from the savior of the teaching profession and the education of the province, to inept reactionary, all in fourteen short years. Unfortunately for Mr. Baker's reputation, the professional teachers' organization of this province has become an extremely powerful organization, and they have kept alive this myth of the Hon. Perren Baker.⁵¹ Typical of the evidence used to indict Mr. Baker is a statement such as the following, written by a former, prominent member of the U.F.A. movement:

[Mr. Baker's] ear was finely tuned to the sentiments of the farming people who would be keeping him in power, and these sentiments did not often harmonize with those of the urban teachers whose voice was most clearly heard in the A.T.A. Moreover, Baker did not mistake the feelings of his Deputy about this upstart Alliance. He therefore never allowed himself any expression of warmth or approval towards our organization until the last years of the Brownlee government.⁵²

Though there is much truth to this statement - for example, Mr. Baker's mistrust of many of the militant, urban teachers⁵³ - there is also the kind of conjecture which does not always protect the truth. John T. Ross, Deputy Minister under Hon. Perren Baker, has become another scapegoat for those looking for someone to blame for the ill condition of the teachers. John Ross had long been prominent in the De-

partment of Education: he had been appointed Chief Inspector of Schools in 1909, and Deputy Minister in 1917.⁵⁴ Whether Dr. Ross had a strong anti-A.T.A. bias or not is difficult to determine. His Minister, Mr. Baker, denies the charge against his Deputy.

As deputy minister, as in every other capacity, he was most conscientious in the discharge of his duty. That duty was not to be a special champion of the cause of the teacher or of the trustee, but to see that, as far as possible, justice was done as between teacher, school board, pupils and taxpayer, whose interest were not always identical.⁵⁵

The charge that Dr. Ross dominated his Ministers of Education, and unduly influenced them against the teachers' organization, could be explained when one understands the nature of Alberta politics since 1905. Alberta history, W.G. Roberts maintains, has been marked by long, unbroken governmental control by one political party. This factor, he continues, "has provided a generally stable political climate for the development of a provincial educational system" which has evolved in a unique manner and direction.⁵⁶ This stability has had a significant effect on the province's civil service:

[This stability in government] enabled the civil service segment of the system to serve known expectations and to act without fear of later incrimination because of a change in government.

This was, of course, very true of the Department of Education. But it is unlikely that Dr. Ross had a much different opinion of unionized teachers than his employer, or anyone else in the Department.⁵⁷ Mr. Baker, as did the Deputy, felt an intense responsibility to the whole of education, not just one

segment. Dr. Swift, who worked under both of these men, writes of Dr. Ross and the Department:

He[John T. Ross] was a big man, stern but kindly, and I believe completely honest and dedicated to his responsibilities. It should be borne in mind that he served as Deputy Minister during a period when in all walks of life less was heard of democratic administration than is now the case. As a junior officer I greatly respected him and am not aware that my colleagues took any umbrage at the manner in which he conducted the affairs of the Department. It is also worth bearing in mind that the total organization was small by today's standards and hence less impersonal.... I think John T. (as he was commonly called) was fully in charge of his department but only in the manner which was acceptable at the time and which was necessary for an efficient and unified operation.⁵⁸

Dr. Swift does not believe that Mr. Baker was subservient to Dr. Ross. Mr. Baker gave his men "a substantial degree of freedom" but was intelligent enough, and conscientious enough, to make his will prevail in the portfolio which he had chosen for himself.

CHAPTER VI

PERREN BAKER AND THE LARGE ADMINISTRATIVE SCHOOL UNIT

The Baker Plan for the Larger Unit

The rudiments of school organization provided by small rural school districts were not likely to suffice for a new age. It is to Perren Baker's credit that he recognized the need for reorganization when he did, and set about the task of promoting change in the organization of his province's education system.

The small school district as an administrative unit was perhaps less suited to geographic and economic conditions, and settlement patterns in Western Canada than to the eastern and central provinces. The economy of this region, based almost wholly on grain growing, has been characterized by large farms and widely scattered rural population, an income dependent upon the vagaries of climate and the market price of wheat, and a relatively low assessment base for each rural school. A drop in the market price of wheat, drought, hail, or an early frost in a section of the country placed educational finances in a precarious position.¹

Alberta was not the only province in which pressure for change was prevalent, nor Canada the only country in turmoil over school organization. England, New Zealand, Australia and several American states were experimenting successfully with large school districts.² Steps towards unification had been taken in Alberta with the organization of consolidated schools and rural consolidated high schools, but progress was too slow to meet the needs of the moment.

Since first assuming the Education portfolio, Perren Baker had been giving close study to the problem of

rural school administration. Some members of Mr. Baker's department had been at work promoting the larger school unit concept. In his 1926 Report, John Ross, the Deputy Minister, had written that "the only satisfactory solution of the problem [secondary education for rural youth] is to organize rural high schools or establish municipal high schools."³ And that same year, George Gorman, Chief Inspector of Schools, called for school district reorganization when he spoke at the Alberta School Trustees' convention:

I do not see that we are going to reach any satisfactory solution of this problem of High School instruction for all until we can evolve a change in our type of unit of school administration. When the people are ready, and the time is not far distant, to accept responsibility for High School instruction in the same way that it is now accepted for public school instruction...we shall be on the way towards a solution. With its own limited means and powers...no individual rural district can ever properly meet our present day educational requirements.⁴

On October 20, 1927, Mr. Baker presented a brief containing the results of his study to the premier and cabinet.⁵ Educational progress in Alberta, Mr. Baker stated, must proceed along two general lines, "first the providing for full time operation of sufficient schools, both primary and secondary, and second, the improving of the quality of the teaching." Especially important, he claimed, was the steadily increasing demand for secondary education:

If the Province is to overtake and keep pace with the urgent and growing need for secondary education, the establishment of the high schools must proceed in a systematic way in accordance with a definite plan, in order that they may be so placed that the entire country may be served as well as possible

without unnecessary overlapping and waste.⁶

The second problem in education, the quality of the teacher, is perhaps the most important consideration, for "the quality of the work done in the classroom depends almost completely on the quality of the teacher."

If our youth could be placed in charge of strong, bright-minded men and women, possessed of moral earnestness and a right outlook, the whole tenor of society would be notably raised in a single generation.⁷

No teacher, Mr. Baker maintained, could be expected to remain teaching in the country schools under existing conditions. Only through school district reorganization could the education of Alberta be improved. He then set forth his proposals for the larger unit, and from that time on he began the task of selling the idea to the people of the province. Two years later, in 1929, the Minister made the decision to bring legislation before the Provincial Legislature to have his proposal for the large unit of school administration enacted. He also presented himself before Alberta's school trustees, in convention, to explain and defend his bill. The Baker Bill, as it came to be called, was based upon an important premise:

I want every child in Alberta, as far as it is possible, to have an equal opportunity for education, and every trustee wants the same. I want to see the burden of this great common undertaking spread as fairly as may be over the province, and I think every trustee wants the same.⁸

Next, Mr. Baker placed before the assembled trustees' of Alberta several problems facing the educators of the province:

The educational opportunities offered are by no means equal. The schools do not all run full time. We have not yet developed any adequate system for providing high school education for the rural children and those of the small hamlets. The burden is very unevenly distributed even in the older portions of the province....we have as teachers in the rural school so many beginners. The trustees complain that they no sooner get a capable teacher than she is gone....There has been complaint of lack of supervision. There are too many misfits.⁹

To meet these serious problems, significant changes in school organization were proposed. Mr. Baker announced that the entire rural school system would be re-organized, though the local district would remain as the basic administrative unit.¹⁰ In addition to the local school districts, other units or levels of administration would be formed: 150 such school districts could make up one large division, for a total of twenty rural divisions throughout the province. Together, these twenty large divisions would be called the general taxing area, and an equalized educational tax would be applied over the whole province. The proposal for the general taxing area was highly controversial, and needed a strong defense:

Our present system of apportioning the cost of education is based on the theory that the ratepayers of each local district are wholly responsible for the education of all children whose parents reside within the boundaries of the district, and have no responsibility whatever for the education of children whose parents reside beyond the boundaries. Any justification there may have been in earlier days for so unequal a distribution of the cost of schools wholly disappeared when the demand for universal compulsory education was embodied in legislation which compels local communities...to be organized into school districts....[The justification for this must] be found in the fact that in these democratic, modern times society has become so complex and its parts so interdependent that the welfare of each individual

is affected by the condition of every other?... Since, then, the provision of schools for all the children of the community is a common need, should not the support of these schools be a common responsibility? Should not the property of all citizens be taxed at a common rate?¹¹

This general taxing area would be governed by a board consisting of the chairmen of each of the twenty divisions, and would be responsible for providing equality of educational opportunity and maintaining a reasonable salary schedule for all the rural teachers.

The twenty divisional boards would each consist of five members, all elected by the ratepayers. This board would be responsible for engaging, supervising and paying their teachers (in accordance with the schedule established by the general board). The work done by the teachers in each division would be supervised by one superintendent in each division and his assistant, these officials to be hired and paid by the Department of Education. The local board would retain all of its present powers, except the hiring and paying of the teacher. All of these changes would result in little additional cost to the ratepayer if the Legislature accepted his bill. Acceptance would give the Minister the power, set forth in part sixteen of the bill, to constitute the necessary divisions by order, rather than by public consent.

These, then, were the proposals set before the trustees by the Minister. And what benefit would result from such changes? Mr. Baker was both confident and optimistic:

[These proposals] will ensure the full-time operation of every school where the number of children warrants it. They provide in the divisional board, an authority under which the ratepayer in 150 districts can co-operate to deal with the high school problem of the division in a comprehensive way. They will give us a fairer distribution of the burden. They will enable us to gradually build up a stronger teaching force. By establishing a reasonable salary schedule, which will offer to the desirable teacher suitable recognition and promotion, we will be able to attract and hold more of the best teachers. They will make for great stability.¹²

Unfortunately for Mr. Baker, the majority of delegates at the convention were not as happy with his plan as was he. At the termination of his address, pandemonium broke loose and reigned for several moments. Mr. Baker best describes the scene:

The official report of the trustees' convention utterly fails to reflect the wild tumult that broke out after I had spoken. Would be speakers, competing for the nod of the Chairman, gave up and shouted their various objections in a deafening chorus. The chairman, whose sole qualification for his position in such an emergency was a powerful voice, was quite unable to prevail over the din. In the intervals of comparative calm speeches were made but, for a time, anyone rising to oppose the majority was given short shift.¹³

The angry objections to Mr. Baker's proposals were largely of three kinds. The first objection questioned the nature of the political state's responsibility in education, and the continuing centralization of power in this sphere. Mr. Baker maintained that education was a legitimate concern of the state since it is the state which taxes, and can thereby support the necessary institutions. In his important memorandum to the cabinet in 1927 Mr. Baker had set forth the justification for

state involvement in education:

The local school district was the first crude machinery designed to put into effect the principle of the tax-supported school. It is a relic of the period of local option in education. Since that time the field of recognized state responsibility has greatly widened. In this province the state creates school districts when necessary, regardless of the opposition of the majority of the people involved. It prescribes the boundaries of the district, the location of the school site, the type of building.... It is submitted that the time has come when in the interest of justice and efficiency the Government of Alberta should go a step further and assume responsibility for the control and payment of our rural teachers.¹⁴

Another objection raised to Mr. Baker's scheme was the claim made by several of the delegates that rural teachers, considering their training and experience, were already receiving sufficient salary, and further assistance to the teaching force was unjustifiable.¹⁵ A third objection concerned the additional cost of the new administrative model, especially as it would affect the older, established school districts.

I think a good many of the delegates favored a change but it was very clear that this convention, which was composed mainly of representatives of the more well-to-do school districts, objected to sharing the cost of educating children in the poorer districts and would have nothing to do with anything that proposed to take away any of the power of the rural trustee - little men greatly value little powers.¹⁶

The Trustees' Convention opposed the new School Act, as did the Municipalities' Association,¹⁷ but the Minister proceeded to move the Bill into the Legislature. His Bill was seconded, and strongly supported, by Mrs. Irene Parlby, "a great booster for the legislation...[for]

in its clauses lay the hope for rural education.¹⁸ The Bill encountered strong opposition in the House, especially the clause which would establish common taxation for the support of the schools. Mr. Baker did his utmost to persuade his opponents that his scheme recognized, as never before, the principle of provincial responsibility in education, as guaranteed by the constitution. The Loyal Opposition remained unmoved, and Mr. Baker finally withdrew his Bill before third reading.

The Bill was not intended to be passed at this session nor to embrace exactly what the Government would consider it wise to enact in this Province. It came forward in the form it did, in order to set before the people what is considered by the Minister of Education as an aim, to go as far as possible in giving better control of rural education and in equalizing the burden to as great a degree as possible. I think, Mr. Speaker, the aims are being attained.¹⁹

The Baker Bill presented to the next sitting of the Legislature in 1930 contained several important changes. The previous provisions for a general taxing area, and the creation of a general board, "through which the divisions would co-operate in raising a general fund for the payment of the salaries of all teachers, were removed.²⁰ Instead, the payment of teachers was to be done by the board of each division, the money being raised by a common mill rate over that division. The province-wide scheme of taxation would be replaced by the tax levy within each division, the poorer districts being subsidized by grants from the provincial government. This was a major concession in principle by Mr. Baker, one which he still agrees with to-

day:

In the Bill of 1930 the idea of one taxing area was dropped; the objections of the richer school districts having to carry the burden of the poorer were well founded; it was more reasonable that the assistance needed should come out of the general revenue of the Province to which all sections contribute.²¹

Finally, the formation of these divisions depended upon a vote of the electorate, rather than being at the discretion of the Minister.

Through the debate in the 1930 session Mr. Baker carried himself courageously. He faced again the barrage of criticism from the opposite side of the House, but remained positive and clear in his attempts to clarify issues. Again and again, he spoke out on behalf of the small school district:

What we have sought to do here is not to wipe out the local district, but to work out a scheme whereby we may get the advantages of the larger unit, without destroying the local unit, which we must maintain. That has not been an easy problem. We purpose to do it, in the Bill, by retaining the local districts as they have existed since territorial days, but to group these districts, and have the ratepayers of the whole area elect one common board to perform certain functions which can best be performed by it - the divisional board.²²

The Minister's labours on behalf of his legislation were not successful in appeasing the enemies of his plan, or in inspiring the reluctant premier and cabinet to force the bill through. Therefore, it was necessary to withdraw the Bill again before it entered committee and then third reading. Speaking to the withdrawal, Mr. Baker attempted to clarify and justify his action.

We have reason to believe that this Bill has not met, and will not meet, with the same opposition as the previous Bill, but representations have come from many sources that in view of the importance of any legislation affecting schools or school administration, the public should have a further opportunity to consider the terms of this Bill before it is finally enacted by the Legislature....[And this Government] will not attempt to force the principle of any larger unit upon the public, other than by educational effort, unless there is very substantial evidence that the general public prepared to support such a change.²³

Response and Reaction

In his two attempts to have the Baker Bill made law, the Minister of Education came under relentless attack in the House from the leading spokesman of the Liberal and Conservative parties in Alberta. Hector Lang, B.A., Liberal leader and M.L.A. from Medicine Hat, had served as a school trustee and as principal of Regina's Collegiate Institute, the latter from 1906 to 1913. He took the position that the condition of rural education was not so serious as the Minister would have them believe. The restoration of the inspectorial staff to the level maintained by the former Liberal governments, or to the level of the Saskatchewan government - fifty in 1927,²⁴ - would solve most of the problems giving worry to Mr. Baker. Whatever was done, though, local control of educational affairs must be continued.

The government of the school belongs to the people whose children attend, who are vitally interested and closely connected with that school....²⁵

To block the passage of the Baker Bill in 1929, Mr. Lang moved an amendment that the Bill be not read, since

it was unsound in principle. He charged that this scheme would unjustifiably interfere with the local control and management of the rural schools, substitute a centralized system for the existing democratic system, greatly increase the administrative machinery, violate the principle of provincial responsibility in education, and make for an unfair distribution of maintenance costs.²⁶

The Conservative leader, A.A. McGillivray, after congratulating the Minister for the "courage of his conviction," opposed the abrogation of the power at the local district boards and the transfer of that power into the hands of the Minister and the Department of Education, which would follow, he believed, from the 1929 Baker proposal. He could support a scheme of unified districts, but only if the districts retained complete autonomy in educational matters. Mr. Baker denied strongly the most important criticism brought against his proposal by the Opposition that session - that his Bill was undemocratic.

The Bill divided the functions of the entire school system between these elected boards. It was said that the Bill was not democratic. In what respect, he asked? Was it contrary to democracy that the people should elect two boards instead of one? The divisional board would engage and pay teachers. The local board would look after all property interests as before. The general board would determine the salary schedule.²⁷

Mr. Baker's revamped Bill the next year did not satisfy the Opposition either. D.M. Duggan, M.L.A. from Edmonton and new Conservative leader, moved an amendment to the new Bill which would see a committee appointed to

look at the whole problem of educational administration in rural Alberta. The new Liberal leader, J.T. Shaw, agreed in principle with the idea of a committee, but instead of just representatives from the Department of Education, the A.T.A. and the A.S.T.A., he would add a representative from the Department of Municipal Affairs and from each of the political parties represented in the Assembly.²⁸ Mr. Baker was accused of making educational reform a political issue rather than something of concern to all, regardless of partisan bias. Citing Manitoba as an example, Mr. Lang showed that only one large division had been formed in over a decade of permissive legislation, perhaps evidence of the failure of the larger unit concept. Mr. Duggan, striking some consistency with the stand his party had taken the previous year, "held that the proposed larger divisions should not be too large and control should not be too remote."²⁹

The debate soon came to an end, and as before the legislation was withdrawn by Mr. Baker before final reading was initiated.

The decision of the cabinet not to push the Bill through was a sore disappointment; however, I was confident that at a future session this would be done. It is not surprising that my fellow ministers did not feel as strongly the urgency of the need for reform of the system as did the minister in charge. Moreover, the great depression was upon us and the Government of Alberta was no more able to end it than any other government in Canada. There was much dissatisfaction; an election was in the offing; there was considerable opposition to the bill and so it was considered unwise to go ahead with it and it was withdrawn before ever going to Committee. Nevertheless, I continued to preach the larger unit on

every possible occasion.³⁰

There was considerable support behind Mr. Baker's proposals, in spite of the intransigency of the Trustees' Association and the opposition parties in the Legislature. The U.F.A. Convention, for example, had expressed approval of the reform by a vote of 206 to 161 at the 1929 Annual Convention, although the closeness of the vote must have given the party leadership some doubts about how far and how long any such new school legislation could be pushed.³¹ The leadership of the U.F.A. movement was almost solidly behind the new educational scheme, but the membership-at-large was not so enthusiastic. Most of the speakers at the convention were pro-larger unit, such as Mrs. R. Clarke Fraser, a leader in the U.F.W.A.:

But I do not think that the school, organized as we have it, is meeting the interests of the people today. We are simply educating our people to go to the city. We cannot keep our young people in the rural schools where we ought to have them. What is the use of educating one little district in Alberta and letting many others go without education? We should have equal rights for every child in this Province. Under this system there will be no hardship to any district.³²

The Alberta Teachers' Alliance also supported the Baker Bill in principle. John W. Barnett, General Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance, gave his reaction to the scheme in a letter to The U.F.A.. Barnett's chief criticism of the 1929 legislation was its hierarchical structure: there should be no General Board and no general taxing area. Rather, the Divisional Board, smaller in size than Mr. Baker had indicated, would be the govern-

ing body, able "to meet together and transact business and, generally, to direct regularly the administration of the Division, except it be at considerable expenditure of effort and time of the members of the Board, with attendant heavy expense."³³ The A.T.A. Magazine had editorially advocated the large unit for several years, and the magazine continued to give its support to the Minister. In an editorial of October, 1928, the editor wrote:

It would appear that the Minister is tackling his problem in a careful and thorough manner and weighing the pros and cons of every alternative. The possibilities of a really great advance, the most forward step that has yet been taken by any province in Canada along the line of administrative reform, is on the eve of fulfilment.³⁴

Mr. Baker, Isidore Goresky writes, was "embittered and exhausted" after his three year struggle to enact the larger unit legislation.³⁵ Perren Baker, other prominent leaders of the U.F.A. movement, and educationists generally, believed that the legislation for the larger school unit was essential to solve the problems of rural education. But the U.F.A. Government, in power throughout a difficult decade, would not gamble on the controversial Baker Bill. Mr. Brownlee himself had apparently arrived at the point where only economically sound moves could be taken. Perhaps this classic statement shows part of the premier's motivation:

If I only knew what the price of wheat was going to be, I'd know what to do.³⁶

Premier Brownlee was not willing, he announced to the House, to see his government "ride rough shod

over the views of the people of this Province."

We believe that there is a general feeling that there could be certain reforms in our educational system. We are anxious to draw the need of these reforms to the attention of the people.³⁷

Mr. Baker must have been heartened by the favourable response to his proposal from educational leaders across the Dominion and in the United States. Dr. George Weir at the University of British Columbia, praised Mr. Baker for "supplying an unique type of leadership from a source from which leadership should naturally emanate"; Dr. Walter Murray, president of the University of Saskatchewan, saw such great merit in the Baker proposals "that every friend of Education will rejoice when you have carried them into effect and shown Canada how to transform its rural education"; and Dr. George Works at the University of Chicago, congratulated the Minister, "on the excellent form in which you have stated your problem and its solution."³⁸

Outcome

Five years later, legislation was enacted to realize the larger unit for educational administration in the province. Mr. Aberhart, the new Premier and Minister of Education, presented the School Divisions Act to the first session of the new Legislative Assembly in the fall of 1935. Unlike Mr. Baker's 1930 Bill, the Aberhart legislation made no provision for plebiscites or votes in local areas, and within three years, rural Alberta had been organized into fifty-six school divisions.³⁹ Dr. Swift

explains the seemingly effortless success of Mr. Aberhart's Government in legislating these measures:

...Mr. Aberhart, and those who worked with him, did continue to pursue ideas already accepted and supported by Mr. Baker. The fact is that conditions existing in 1935 were so different that an entirely new set of circumstances prevailed. Mr. Aberhart was elected because of his Social Credit doctrine, as a financial Messiah to cure the ills of the depression and various other evils. He received a tremendous mandate. The fact that his platform, or that of the party, included some educational reforms, was not really paid much attention to by the electorate. Nevertheless there they were and were taken to be part of the mandate. They were proceeded with in circumstances such that even though unpopular in a great many quarters (I attended some school division organization meetings and know from first hand) the Government was safe, almost revered, for entirely different reasons, and hence could push ahead.⁴⁰

An earlier and less spectacular outcome of the struggle for the larger unit was the establishment of two experimental larger units in Alberta - Turner Valley in 1928 and Berry Creek in 1933. These experimental units "helped prepare the way for a new kind of district organization."⁴¹ In both areas there had been a complete breakdown of the education system, and the Department of Education was faced with the task of overcoming the particular problems faced in each of the areas. In Turner Valley the great influx of oil workers and their families after the 1928 oil strike caused a tremendous increase in the school population without an appreciable increase in either local tax revenues or provincial grants:

Faced with an almost impossible situation the trustees' in all districts in the oil field resigned en masse and the whole area was placed under the administrative direction of the resident inspector as official trustee.⁴²

In the Hanna area of the province - hard hit by the drought conditions of the depression years, - the Berry Creek School District, under the administration of an inspector as official trustee, was formed in 1933. Here, bitter agricultural conditions combined with low market prices to drive the people off the land. The depopulation forced the closure of many schools in this southern region.⁴³ Jean Burnet, in her study of the Hanna area,⁴⁴ writes of the success of the Berry Creek Division:

...the Department of Education set up a large unit as an experiment. The region chosen was in the Hanna Inspectorate, south of the town of Hanna. Of sixty-seven school districts brought into the unit, only twenty-one had been able to operate. The financial success of the scheme, was immediate. For the district involved, the cost of operation of schools for the fiscal year 1933, during which the new program was in effect for only the last four months, was \$37,000. In 1934 the cost, including extraordinary expenses for the moving of schools and the setting up of dormitories, was \$23,395. The estimate for 1935 was \$21,000.⁴⁵

The success of these two experimental divisions in Alberta, added to the success of the division formed in neighbouring British Columbia in 1933,⁴⁶ paved the way for the eventual realization of Mr. Baker's dream for reorganizing rural education in Alberta.

The three experiments in adapting administrative structure to local conditions proved their worth in Alberta and British Columbia within a very short time and demonstrated the improvements in effectiveness and efficiency which could be made. The success of these experiments did not immediately convince all the people and thus none of the governments in the four western provinces felt they could risk their political future by putting the new type of organization in effect by statutory decree on a province-wide basis.⁴⁷

Thus, Alberta became a leader in the reorganization of rural education. The writer believes that the promotion of educational reform by Mr. Baker and his supporters within the U.F.A. must have speeded public acceptance of the changes when they finally appeared.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The writer believes that this thesis has documented the contribution made to education in Alberta by Perren Baker during his tenure as Minister of Education. Education was the portfolio Mr. Baker had expressed his preference for, and this thesis has demonstrated Mr. Baker's concern for, and activity on behalf of, rural education in the province. The one piece of legislation which might have been his crowning achievement, the larger school unit, did not come during Mr. Baker's term of office. Mr. Baker believed in both the desirability and inevitability of the Baker Bill, but was unable to overcome the inertia and fear of an old and tired administration which by 1929 was ringed with trouble and shot through with discouragement.

Mr. Baker and his fellow Ministers have been accused of losing faith in the destiny of the agrarian dream for the good life to be built on the prairie. Perhaps some of his fellow Ministers had given up hope for a bright future; as for Mr. Baker, he had never been a visionary or utopian. He joined the U.F.A. to secure a better economic deal for himself and his fellow farmers. He entered politics when he realized that the traditional parties could not respond to the needs of the agriculturalists. After he became a Cabinet Minister he served with the same scrupulousness which he applied to every aspect of his life. He re-

fused to allow the schools to be used as vehicles for any particular ideology, even when his supporters demanded this of him. Mr. Baker would not allow schools in his charge to hold back the inevitable: that is, the disappearance of the small farm, and the rapid urbanization of an increasingly technological society. As a result, his tenure as Minister of Education was not marked by any significant, deviant educational innovation. He carried on with the pattern set by his predecessors: compromise, encouragement, initiative and promotion. The history of education in Alberta, at least until 1935, was an evolving progression of one small development following another. Educational direction was set as early as Premier Rutherford; Mr. Baker did little to remake or change educational aims or direction.

If the Minister had responded to the wishes of the articulate intelligentsia within his movement, the idealists and visionaries like Irene Parlby, William Irvine and I.V. Macklin, the fourteen years of U.F.A. power might have been vastly different, at least in education. These leaders, part of a significant minority, had their minds set on the building of a new social order in Western Canada. Fulfilment of their dreams was frustrated by the cautious Baker and the politically astute Brownlee. It was partly for this reason that these reformers were so willing to throw aside the U.F.A. and rush into the emerging socialist party, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, in the 1930's.

Nevertheless, the educational promotion done by William Irvine, I.V. Macklin, Mrs. Gunn, Mrs. Parlby and others, helped prepare the people of Alberta for the coming of progressive education after 1935. The ramifications of the U.F.A. upon progressive education in Alberta still need to be shown, but many of the reforms to be introduced after the U.F.A. had faded ignominiously into history, were first introduced and sponsored by this farmer movement. Thus, this writer believes that the U.F.A. left a definite mark on the educational system of this province.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER I

FOOTNOTES

¹Mr. Baker's "Reminiscences" have not as yet been published. When published, they will have only limited, private circulation.

²Ibid.

³For publication information, see the bibliography.

⁴For a list of these theses, please consult the bibliography.

⁵For publication information on these and other books please consult the bibliography.

CHAPTER II

FOOTNOTES

¹L.G. Thomas, The Liberal Party in Alberta, p. 32.

²Ibid., pp. 81-83. Rutherford's later career included his tenure as Chancellor of the University of Alberta. While Chancellor, the Senate of the University refused to bestow on Mr. William Aberhart, premier of Alberta, 1935-1943, an honorary degree. Because of illness, Mr. Rutherford was not able to preside over the Senate meetings which were the cause of much embarrassment to Alberta's premier.

³Ibid., p. 185.

⁴W.L. Morton, The Progressive Party in Canada, p. 8.

⁵Paul F. Sharp, The Agrarian Revolt in Western Canada, p. 43.

⁶Ibid., p. 87.

⁷Ibid., p. 102. On that same page, Sharp writes: "The League prepared the ground for the seeds of political revolt which flowered in the Progressive movement. Western farmers were reached by the gospel of political action and indoctrinated in the necessity of group action."

⁸L.G. Thomas, op. cit., p. 189.

⁹Isidore Goresky, "The Beginning and Growth of the Alberta Education System," 1944, pp. 92-96. Separate schools must organize within the confines of a public school district. In these schools, the last part of the day may be used for religious instruction, religious holidays may be observed, and Catholic parents may direct their taxes to their own schools.

¹⁰Upon the closing of the Camrose Normal School in 1938, Principal Haverstock's remarks paid tribute to Mr. Smith. "The Camrose Normal School has stood all these years as a monument to one man and his endeavor on behalf of Camrose and the cause of education in this province - the Honorable George P. Smith." George Mann, "Alberta Normal Schools: A Descriptive Study of Their Development, 1905 to 1945," M.Ed. thesis, 1961, p. 163.

¹¹John W. Chalmers, Teachers of the Foothills Province, pp. 28-29.

¹²K.M. MacNab, "A History of the Alberta Teachers' Association," unpublished M.A. thesis, 1949, p. 9.

¹³Dr. W.H. Swift, in his letter of November 13, 1968. He also writes: "Much of J.W. Barnett's time was taken up in recruiting members under the voluntary system. He found much opposition and apathy among the ranks of the teachers." (My emphases).

¹⁴Dr. A.F. Deverell, University of Saskatchewan, writes: "My uncle (George P. Smith) had in mind a vast program of educational reform which encompassed consolidation for high schools, much higher provincial grants improved teacher preparation and salaries. But the farmers came and heard him and remained silent and voted for better roads. (August 13, 1968)

¹⁵In 1918, under J.R. Boyle, the minimum salary was set at \$840.00. This was one of the many changes made in the Ordinance of that year. Even this figure would prove too optimistic in the years ahead.

¹⁶John W. Chalmers, op. cit., p. 39.

¹⁷Isidore Goresky, op. cit., p. 118.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 99.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 99.

²⁰John M. MacEachran, "History of Education in Alberta," Canada and Its Provinces, volume XX, p. 485. The Department of Agriculture was also liberal in its grants for farm educational endeavors. In the early years of its existence the U.F.A. received a "substantial grant" from the Liberal government. This is ironical considering later developments. N.F. Priestley and E.B. Swindlehurst, Furrows, Faith and Fellowship, p. 33.

²¹Ibid., p. 485-486.

²²L.G. Thomas, op. cit., p. 22.

²³In his doctoral theses, "The Large Units of School Administration in Alberta," University of Oregon, 1951, J.C. Jonason lists these advantages of the small school district, p. 59.

²⁴J.M. MacEachran, op. cit., p. 499.

²⁵Ibid., p. 502.

²⁶Maisie Emery Cook, Memories of a Pioneer School-teacher, p. 6-7. Another indication of the hardships faced by those working in education, comes from the report of an inspector in the Red Deer District in 1909. The major needs of the school are "the operation of the schools for a full ten month year and not merely for short terms; qualified teachers who would remain in the profession instead of permit holders and transients; a more practical course of study and a more practical program of teacher training; better roads and improved transportation; more money; and more energetic and zealous attention of citizens and educators to the rural schools." No mean list, to say the least. Quoted from C.E. Phillips, The Development of Education in Canada, p. 231.

²⁷Norman Priestley and Edward Swindlehurst, Furrows, Faith and Fellowship, p. 27. Either Premier Rutherford did not clarify the difference between an education in agriculture, received through the university, and a training in agriculture, obtained after 1913 in the agricultural schools apart from the university; or by 1913, Mr. Rutherford having left politics, Liberal policy concerning agricultural education (or training) had taken a new direction.

²⁸L.G. Thomas, op. cit., p. 150. The curriculum of these schools was carefully laid out: "...the teaching of practical and scientific farming, household economy, and domestic science."

²⁹Quoted in the Camrose Canadian, April 18, 1920.

³⁰Isidore Goresky, op. cit., p. 121.

³¹Ibid., p. 102.

³²Alberta, Department of Education, Annual Report, 1920, p. 15.

³³B.E. Walker, "Public Secondary Education in Alberta: Organization and Curriculum, 1889-1951," p. 124. The hope to introduce a special rural curriculum into the consolidated school was not fulfilled, according to Dr. Walker.

³⁴R.L. McCall, "A History of the Rural High School in Alberta," p. 14.

³⁵R.L. McCall, op. cit., p. 22.

³⁶Ibid., p. 22.

³⁷Dr. G.S. Lord, letter dated June 14, 1969. John Charyk describes some of the problems faced by the Department of Education, Dr. Lord, and his contemporaries: "The pioneers of the West had come from eastern Canada, Great Britain and the United States: they were resolved that their tradition of combined order and freedom should not be lost and they knew that one of the best means of instilling the immigrant with these objectives was to teach him the English language. Fortunately the majority of immigrants were equally keen to learn it, knowing that without it they would be at a disadvantage. Yet many of them loved their mother tongues and decided to retain them. The problem was further complicated by the presence of French who felt that the history of their ancestors in Canada put their language in a different light from those of the other non-English speaking peoples. In spite of these difficulties the majority of immigrants planned to provide their children with an education...." The Little White Schoolhouse, Saskatoon, The Western Producer, 1968, p. 1. The policy of the Liberal government with regards to the schooling of ethnic groups was, C.E. Phillips claims, "highly successful." Op. cit., p. 231.

³⁸George Mann, "Alberta Normal Schools: A Descriptive Study of their Development, 1905 to 1945," p. 42.

³⁹George Mann, "Alberta Normal Schools: A Descriptive Study of their Development, 1905 to 1945," unpublished M.Ed. thesis, University of Alberta, 1961, p. 28.

⁴⁰The A.T.A. Magazine, March, 1923, p. 19.

⁴¹John M. MacEachran, op. cit., p. 490.

⁴²Hon. G.P. Smith, quoted in the Camrose Canadian, Thursday, July 31, 1919, p. 1.

⁴³Alberta, Department of Education, Annual Report, 1921.

⁴⁴Quoted by Dr. Walter Johns in "These Sixty Years," an address to the Jubilee Convocation of the University of Alberta, May 13, 1968.

⁴⁵Barbara V. Cormack, Perennials and Politics, p. 69. This organization is still active today in the rural areas of the province.

⁴⁶B.E. Walker, op. cit., p. 86.

CHAPTER III

FOOTNOTES

¹W.K. Rolph, Henry Wise Wood of Alberta, p. 32.

²S.M. Lipset gives this explanation in the introduction to Agrarian Socialism, p. xiv.

³Hon. R.G. Reid, last premier of the U.F.A.. taped interview.

⁴W.L. Morton, The Progressive Party in Canada, p. 11.

⁵W.K. Rolph, Henry Wise Wood of Alberta, p. 50.

⁶W.L. Morton, op. cit., p. 15.

⁷As late as 1918, eight of the nineteen executive members of the U.F.A. were U.S. born, Ibid., p. 38.

⁸W.K. Rolph, op.cit., p. 176.

⁹There is a vast literature on the meaning and place of the frontier in Western development. The classic expression of this thesis is F.J. Turner's, The Frontier in American History, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1907.

¹⁰S.D. Clark, The Developing Canadian Community, p. 214.

¹¹C.B. McPherson, Democracy in Alberta: Social Credit and the Party System, p. 68.

¹²Barbara V. Cermack, Perennials and Politics, p. 12.

¹³Ibid., p. 73.

¹⁴W.L. Morton, "The Social Philosophy of Henry Wise Wood, the Canadian Agrarian Leader," Agricultural History, 1948, p. 121.

¹⁵For a time, William Irvine edited the paper which was accepted as the organ of the U.F.A., The Western Independent, 1919 to 1920.

¹⁶Interview with Hon. R.G. Reid, last premier of the U.F.A. government in Alberta.

¹⁷It is difficult to know how popular Premier Stewart was with the rural people of Alberta. Himself a farmer, he was not opposed personally in the 1921 election. Yet he took a strong stand against Wood's group government idea. Former Premier Reid, in a taped interview, offers the recollection that the Liberal premier's popularity had declined by the time of this election.

¹⁸L.G. Thomas, The Liberal Party in Alberta, p. 204.

¹⁹As early as 1916, the U.F.A. put into words their dissatisfaction with the existing political and economic establishment: "...parliament is becoming more and more under the direct influence of industrial, financial and transportation interests, represented by men of wealth in financial and industrial centres." W.K. Rolph, Henry Wise Wood of Alberta, p. 50.

²⁰W.L. Morton explains this as follows: Because of its federal successes the farmers' movements lost some of their "militant sectionalism". To preserve this militancy - thought to be worthwhile - the farmers moved into provincial politics, where they made but little impact. Thus, by dividing their efforts, they lost their grander opportunity to promote change, and ceased to have reason for their existence.

²¹W.K. Rolph, op. cit., p. 188.

²²W.L. Morton attributes part of the cause for dissension within the federal progressivist ranks to the personality clash between T.A. Crerar and H.W. Wood. The clash supposedly arose from Crerar receiving the Cabinet appointment from Robert Borden, and Wood going without. Rolph does not interpret events in this way. (See W.L. Morton. "The Social Philosophy of Henry Wise Wood, The Canadian Agrarian Leader,") Agricultural History, 1948, p.115.

²³W.L. Morton, op. cit., p. 280.

²⁴Ibid., p. 267. Morton, p. 157, pays credit as well to the progressive group for (1) having the Crow's Nest rates restored, and (2) getting the Wheat Board re-established.

²⁵Dean McHenry records: "...the (U.F.O.) government proceeded to bring Ontario up to date in social legislation, to extend rural electrification under the provincially owned hydroelectric system, and to achieve other modest reforms." The Third Force in Canada, p. 12.

²⁶W.L. Morton, Manitoba - A History, p. 379.

²⁷Premier Bracken remained head of the Labour-Progressive party until 1942. At that time he accepted the leadership of the Conservative Party of Canada, significantly relabeled "Progressive-Conservative" by his wish.

²⁸W.L. Morton, The Progressive Party in Canada, p. 111.

²⁹The Co-operative (or Group) government of Premier Anderson, which came to power in Saskatchewan in 1929, was not a farmers' government in the strict usage of the word. It was a coalition with a preponderance of Conservatives.

³⁰Dean McHenry, op. cit., p. 15.

³¹Ibid., p. 15.

³²Margaret Ormsby, "The United Farmers of British Columbia - an Abortive Third Party Movement," British Columbia Historical Review, vol. 17-18, 1953-1954, p.73.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Arthur R. Ford treats this matter somewhat differently. Morton has Wood turned down; Ford has Wood refusing the appointment. See Ford's "Some Notes on the Formation of Union Government in 1917," Canadian Historical Review, 1938, p. 363.

³⁵W.L. Morton, The Progressive Party in Canada, p. 225.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 38-39.

³⁷Ibid., p. 286.

³⁸N.F. Priestley and E.B. Swindlehurst, Furrows, Faith, and Fellowship, p. 115.

CHAPTER IV

FOOTNOTES

¹Convention Minutes, U.F.A. Convention, 1921, p. 4.

²The resolutions brought before the U.F.A. Convention by the Educational Committee did not preclude various locals from bringing their own educational resolutions before the farmers. This was the case each year.

³Minutes, U.F.A. Convention, 1934, p. 14. Resolutions calling for less emphasis placed on examinations, and removing academic obstacles such as a foreign language requirement were intended to extend educational opportunity as well. See I.V. Macklin, "Study of Languages in High Schools," The U.F.A., June 15, 1929, p. 12.

⁴Ibid., p. 14.

⁵At the 1934 Convention, the Wetaskiwin local presented the following resolution (Minutes, p. 75): Be it resolved that our education system should be so transformed to direct the thought of our young people along co-operative lines rather than along the lines of an outworn competitive tradition, and we call upon the Alberta government for action in accordance with this principle. The resolution carried.

⁶Ibid., p. 14. The Macklin Committee was relentless in its bid to change the bias of the secondary curriculum. For example, in 1930 Mr. Macklin wrote: "To make room for new material on the course, we suggest that a subject such as trigonometry could be made optional, and that the farm youth who failed to study that subject would not in consequence suffer any serious handicap in his adult life. The problem which will confront the citizens of tomorrow will not be solved by higher mathematics so much as by a higher outlook on life, and we believe that a study of co-operation does give a higher outlook and a better principle for the equitable working out of our economic affairs. "Report of Educational Committee to the Annual Convention," The U.F.A. April 1, 1930, p. 6.

⁷I.V. Macklin, "From the Farmers' standpoint in 1933," (Being a discussion of some of the subjects dealt with by the 1933 U.F.A. Convention), pamphlet, Glenbow Foundation Archives, Calgary.

⁸Hon. Irene Parlby, "Creative Education," Minutes of the U.F.W.A. Convention, Glenbow Foundation, Calgary.

⁹Ibid., 1925, p. 44.

¹⁰Hon. Irene Parlby, "Some Schools in the Old Lands," The U.F.A., September 16, 1929, p. 8. Thirty years earlier, American Agrarians were expressing similar objections: "... rural education was unimaginative and irrelevant, that it dealt too much with books and too little with life, that it educated away from the country and toward the city, and that only a massive infusion of agricultural studies could save it from complete decay." L.A. Cremin, The Transformation of the School, p. 43.

¹¹Barbara Villy Cormack, Perennials and Politics, p. 124.

¹²Agnes Macphail, "Education as the Basis of the New Social Life," (An address to the U.F.A. Annual Convention), The U.F.A., p. 7.

¹³L.R. Barrett, "The Rural Elementary School," The U.F.A., November 1, 1928, p. 10.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁵S. Margaret Gunn, "President's Address," U.F.W.A. Convention Reports, January 1926, p. 5. (Courtesy Glenbow Foundation Archives.)

¹⁶Ibid., p. 19.

¹⁷An address to the 1926 Trustees' Convention, reported in The A.T.A. Magazine, March 1927, p. 5. This question is also discussed in Chapter One.

¹⁸Personal interview with Mr. Baker in Vancouver, June, 1969. In his "Reminiscences," now being written, Mr. Baker has written: "Stern reality was asserting itself over the dream of governments which had pictured a prosperous happy family on every half-section. So in our county, as in all the southern wheat area from Manitoba all the way to the Rockies, one by one the homes of the original settlers were disappearing....And in most instances, not even a hole in the ground to mark the spot where hope had once flourished.

Still, though robbed of its stable and outhouses, the deserted school stood on its knoll, a lonely landmark seen for miles around; a melancholy symbol of more populous days when it had been the center of a spirited community.

¹⁹Letter from Hon. Perren Baker, October 23, 1968.

²⁰C.B. McPherson, Democracy in Alberta. Mr. McPherson records: "The premier [Brownlee] showed himself fully aware of and content with the implications of cabinet government." (p.77)

²¹Ibid., p. 80.

²²Ibid., p. 85.

²³Ibid., p. 90.

²⁴Correspondence from Mr. J.E. Cook, Edmonton, formerly an active member and leader in the U.F.A. movement. (December 31, 1968)

²⁵Report of speech given by H.W. Wood to the 1932 Annual Convention of the U.F.A., The U.F.A., March 1, 1932, p. 4.

²⁶Convention Minutes, U.F.A. Annual Convention, 1927, p. 115.

²⁷Ibid., 1928, p. 152.

²⁸Convention Minutes, U.F.W.A. Annual Convention, January, 1929, pp. 10-16. The first Institute of Co-operation was organized in 1928, upon "receipt by the Province [in reality, the Department of Agriculture] of the sum of \$112,000 from the unclaimed residue of the disbanded Wheat Board monies." The U.F.A., July 3, 1928. Mr. Hoadley, who received the money for his Department, and this work, from the Wheat Board Monies fund, was hopeful about the spread of ideas in co-operation throughout the schools: "Education of this type would be given in the schools of the Province and would become a part of the curricula in the same way as history and arithmetic." Ibid., p. 7.

²⁹R.S. Patterson, "The Establishment of Progressive Education in Alberta," p. 58.

³⁰R.S. Patterson, op. cit., p. 69; B.E. Walker, "Public Secondary Education in Alberta...", p. 89.

³¹R.S. Patterson, op. cit., p. 69. Mr. Baker, in personal interview, denied that this new practice was a result of his efforts to initiate a different approach. Curriculum revision committees, he claimed, were at work continually, usually independent of the Department. The writer tends to see Mr. Baker's side on this. There is the contin-

uing tendency to forget the ever-present pragmatism of these men in government, and to see evidence of idealism at work. Such was seldom the case, at least in Mr. Baker's Department.

³²William Irvine, The Farmers in Politics, pp. 38-39.

³³Letter to Hon. Perren Baker, February 19, 1929, in the writer's possession. Mr. Baker confirmed, in interview, his intention to have preserved the one-room school for use by the elementary grades.

³⁴"Report of the Education Committee," Convention Minutes, U.F.W.A. Convention, 1932, pp. 19-21.

³⁵See especially, "School Affairs in Manitoba," Grain Growers' Guide, November 10, 1920.

³⁶R.S. Patterson, op. cit., p. 72.

³⁷N.P. Lambert, "The Farmer in Politics," The Grain Growers' Guide, July 7, 1920, p. 67.

³⁸B.E. Walker, op. cit., p. 90. There was increasing pressure within the U.F.A. Annual Convention to lighten the curriculum in the secondary school. For example, at the 1929 Convention, the Nanton local set forth this resolution, which subsequently was carried: "That the high school curriculum be reduced either by lessening the number of subjects or the ground covered in them so that the work can be covered by the average pupil in four years." Convention Minutes, U.F.A. Annual Convention, 1929, p. 20.

³⁹Ibid., p. 150.

⁴⁰A clipping from the Calgary Herald, August 17, 1928, among the Hoadley papers at the Glenbow Foundation.

⁴¹I.V. Macklin, "Study of Languages in High Schools," The U.F.A., January 15, 1929, p. 12.

⁴²Ibid., p. 12.

⁴³Isidore Goresky found that "the general tendency from 1920 to 1935 was towards a reduction of grants" (in education). "The Beginning and Growth of the Alberta School System," M.Ed. thesis, 1944, p. 128.

⁴⁴I.V. Macklin, "From a Farmers' Standpoint in 1933," pamphlet, Macklin papers, Glenbow Foundation Archives, Calgary.

⁴⁵The A.T.A. Magazine, May 26, 1926, pp. 15, 16. In the first rural municipal school in the West, Miniota in Manitoba, equality of taxation was practiced: "...every child must have an equal opportunity to attend school regularly throughout the year and must have an equal opportunity to attend high school when he is ready for it." "Known By Their Schools," The Country Guide, August 1931, p. 16.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 16.

⁴⁷This information is contained in the record of the Annual Convention, Courtesy Glenbow Foundation Archives, Calgary.

⁴⁸Correspondence from Mr. Baker, October 23, 1968.

⁴⁹Barbara V. Cormack, Perennials and Politics, p. 68. Inspector of schools George Gorman, before the Alberta Trustees in 1926, offered similar sentiments: "The duties belonging to farm life develop industry and dependability; association with nature paves the way for the study of literature, science, and art....Country life and environment steadies, vitalizes, and stabilizes the race, and keeps it sane." The A.T.A. Magazine, March 1927, p. 7.

⁵⁰W.E. Mann, Sect, Cult and Church in Alberta, p. 157. Once again we witness the dualism within the farmers' movement. On the one hand, as Mann points out, there is the fundamentalist - agrarian ideology, among the membership at large, it would appear. On the other hand, the U.F.A., especially at leadership level, contained a sizable group of liberal religionists of the social gospel type. This writer suspects that the former element made an easy transfer to Mr. Aberhart's legions; the latter found a home in the C.C.F. Among this latter group would surely be found Norman Lambert, writer for the Grain Growers' Guide. He writes, "There has never been anything in the history of Canadian politics quite so national or unmistakably progressive in character as the present agrarian movement.... It represents the bursting into bloom of those seeds of liberty and freedom, so antagonistic and unfriendly to the arrogant control of special privilege." July 7, 1920, p. 67.

⁵¹For a discussion of this "frontier thesis" see an article in Nationalism in Canada: S.D. Clark, "The Developing Canadian Community," pp. 208+.

⁵²Agnes Macphail, "Education as the Basis of the New Social Order," The U.F.A., March 23, 1927, p. 6.

⁵³Minutes of the Edgerton Local, 1921, in the U.F.A. papers, Provincial Archives, Edmonton.

⁵⁴Hon. Perren Baker, "Reminiscences", unpublished

⁵⁵"Address of the Hon. Perrin [sic] Baker, Minister of Education," The A.T.A. Magazine, June 1922, p. 11.

CHAPTER V

FOOTNOTES

¹Letter from J.F. Lymburn, Q.C., October 10, 1968.

²Ibid.

³Letters from Mr. and Mrs. J.E. Cook, December 31, 1968. In actuality, Mr. Baker is not a relatively tall man - perhaps 5'8".

⁴Ibid. Mr. Cook contacted Mr. A.G. Campbell, Mr. Baker's life-long friend, for this information.

⁵Interview with Chester A. Ronning in Camrose, June 20, 1968. Dr. Ronning, a left-wing U.F.A. member was surely disappointed at the reticence of the government to act more effectively to cure the depression, and the accompanying educational problems.

⁶Perren E. Baker, "Reminiscences". This writer sees both views as valid. The heavy responsibilities of political office had a sobering effect on this "peaceful rebel."

⁷Letter from Hon. Mr. Baker, November 14, 1968. The information about Mr. Baker's beginnings came from personal interview. There is some confusion as to the year Mr. Baker arrived at Nemiskamin. He mentioned 1909 in the interview; in his Reminiscences 1910 is the date given. D.A. McKerricher gives the date as 1910 in his A.T.A. Magazine article introducing the new Minister of Education.

⁸Perren Baker, - "Reminiscences," unpublished.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹"He [Mr. Baker] was chairman of the school board [at Nemiskamin] for three years and also served three years on the municipal council." D.A. McKerricher "Our New Minister of Education," The A.T.A. Magazine, 1921.

¹²Letter from Hon. Perren Baker, November 14, 1968.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Dr. Swift's recollection of a U.F.A. convention is valuable: "At the U.F.A. convention there was a resolution urging that the schools be used, through an appropriate text or course, to promote the idea of co-operation, that is in the sense of the development of co-operatives, which the U.F.A. organization, not the political party, was sponsoring and promoting. Mr. Baker spoke against the resolution stating that the schools should not be used to promote "our peculiar philosophy." A delegate objected to the U.F.A. philosophy being called "peculiar." Mr. Baker explained with great politeness the different meanings of the word "peculiar" and that he was not using it in "any invidious sense." Mr. Baker was an extremely clear and precise speaker with a very fine appreciation of the niceties of words." Letter from Dr. Swift, November 13, 1968. One of the few times Mr. Baker openly promoted the principle of co-operation was in trying to sell the idea of the small school districts co-operating for the betterment of education in Alberta. "We must do for education what has been done for marketing." The U.F.A., January 2nd, 1929, p. 20.

¹⁶Hon. Perren E. Baker, "The Place of Education in the Life of the Community," The U.F.A., September 1, 1922, p. 4.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Rural High Schools in Alberta, published by authority of Hon. Perren Baker, 1930, p. 8.

¹⁹Letter from Mr. Baker, November 14, 1968, and personal interview. It was only the considerable pressure, brought to bear upon the cautious government by the irate citizens of Camrose, which saved that institution for several more years. In his letter of July 1, 1969, Dr. Milton Lazerte, first Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta, mentions that Mr. Baker was anxious to give the university responsibility for teacher training. "Mr. Baker believed that teachers-in-training should be trained to do certain things in the classroom so effectively that they would 'earn their money' when they had accepted their first schools." See also George Mann, "Alberta Normal Schools: A Descriptive Study of Their Development, 1905 to 1945," M.Ed., 1916, p. 159. The government thwarted in its attempt to close Camrose Normal in 1932, closed Edmonton Normal the next year. The latter was to soon reopen for a final, brief period of operation.

²⁰"Address of the Hon. Perren Baker, Minister of Education," (to the Alberta Teachers' Convention), The A.T.A. Magazine, June 1922, p. 11. The Minister, on one

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occassion at least, discouraged vocational training: "The teacher would do well not to trouble herself over-much with vocational training. Even though every child were given a profession or trade there would still be unemployment. The task of the schools today remained as it had been - to educate persons. Let the schools send out pupils into the world with some appreciation of the conditions in which they would have to live, with some degree of Christian and moral earnestness, and all would be well. Vocational training would come as it was needed." Hon. Perren Baker in an address to the Alberta Education Association, reported in The A.T.A. Magazine, June, 1931.

²¹Letter from Hon. Perren Baker, October 23, 1968.

²²Letter from Dr. W.H. Swift, November 13, 1968.

²³John Charles Jacques in his 1946 Master's thesis for the University of Wisconsin, "Insurgency on the Canadian Prairies, 1918-1938," explains how Canadian crop production, over stimulated by European demands before 1910, soon over-extended itself. This led to a check in the Canadian economy and a drastic reduction of grain prices.

²⁴Alberta, Department of Education, Annual Report, 1922.

²⁵The Canadian Annual Review, (Alberta), 1922, p. 805.

²⁶Alberta, Department of Education, Annual Report, 1922.

²⁷Ibid., 1923 (Deputy Minister's report)

²⁸The Canadian Annual Review, (Alberta), 1923, p. 737, p. 749. To the 1929 School Trustee's Convention, Mr. Baker explained his reasons for cutting the inspection staff in 1923: "In the year 1921, which was the year in which the present Government took office, the province closed its books with a deficit of some \$2,000,000, due to the fact that the previous Legislature voted to increase expenditures by that amount, without making corresponding provision for increased revenue. Moreover, the capital borrowings of that year, which amounted to over \$17,000,000, increased the annual interest charges which the province must henceforth pay by nearly another million. In drawing up its first budget, in 1922, the Government was therefore faced with the difficulty that expenditures on the established scale required \$3,000,000 more than the existing revenue would provide.

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In spite of the strictest economy throughout the year the books were again closed with a \$2,000,000 deficit. It was then realized that more drastic cuts must be made even though it hurt. No one regretted more than I did, the necessity for curtailing the inspection service, but Governments, like individuals, must cut their garment to fit the cloth. (Report of the Annual Convention, February, 1929, p. 97)

²⁹Alberta, Department of Education, Annual Report, 1927.

³⁰Ibid., 1930, (Report of John T. Ross)

³¹Ibid., 1931.

³²J.W. Chalmers, Teachers of the Foothills Province, p. 5.

³³By 1931, the Annual Report of the Department of Education indicated that the average rural teachers' salary was over \$1000.00 and the urban salary over \$1600.00 yearly.

³⁴J.W. Chalmers, op. cit., p. 49. Legislation was also enacted in 1933 to empower "the Minister of Education to authorize until July 1st, 1934, the engagement of any teacher at a salary less than the minimum payable under the [School] Act. Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Annual Survey of Education, J.O. Patenaude, King's Printer, p. xxxiii.

³⁵C.K. Brown and F. Enns, "The Development of Teacher Tenure Legislation in Alberta," The Alberta Journal of Educational Research, vol. XII, No. 1, March 1966, p. 49. By 1934, the average teachers' salary in the province was \$738.29. When one considers that urban teachers were able to more effectively protect their interests than their rural counterparts, it is alarming to think of what some of the rural teachers must have been earning.

³⁶Letter from Dr. W.H. Swift, June 18, 1969. The Annual Survey of Education for 1934, pp. xxvi-xxvii, states that "The seven million dollars of school taxes collected during the calendar year 1933 was about one and one-quarter less than the previous year and very little larger than the amount collected in the year 1920."

³⁷Ibid. Dr. Swift also writes: "I am under the impression that in some adjacent provinces where there was no such legislation, or no such ministerial and departmental resistance to its erosion that average salaries dropped much lower than in Alberta." J.T. Ross, in his Report of

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1934, records the average salary in the province as \$738.29, "a very high average when compared with those of other provinces of the Dominion."

³⁸George Mann, "Alberta Normal Schools" A Descriptive Study of their Development, 1905 to 1945," p. 128.

³⁹These measures did not, J.T. Ross maintains in his Report of 1932, affect the enrolment at the Normal Schools.

⁴⁰Isidore Goresky, "The Beginning and Growth of the Alberta School System," p. 141. The "emasculatation," as Chalmers sees it, of Ronning's Bill, "was the last disappointment which the U.F.A. Government administered to the A.T.A." J.W. Chalmers, op. cit., p. 128.

⁴¹Alberta, Department of Education, Annual Report, 1934, pp.13-17. To further strengthen the "new education" in the province, a special course was given to teachers, especially selected by the inspectors, to demonstrate the working of the new curriculum to be introduced in 1936-1937. "These teachers are to experiment with the course during the 1935-1936 school year." Annual Survey of Education in Canada, 1936, pp. xxvi-xxviii, J.O. Patenrude, King's Printer, Ottawa.

⁴²The hypothesis concerning the teacher optimism with the farmers' movement is from W.G. Robert's doctoral thesis, "The Alberta School Trustees' Association...", p.122.

⁴³D.A. McKerricher, "Our New Minister of Education," The A.T.A. Magazine, 1921, vol.II, no. 5, pp. 11-13.

⁴⁴J.W. Chalmers, op. cit., pp. 60-66. Briefly, the teachers asked for: "a continuous contract terminable on not less than 30 days' notice; (b) a period of notice longer than five days respecting hearings on dismissals notices; (c) right of a teacher to be represented at such hearings by an advocate or agent of his own choice; (d) establishment of a board of conciliation with a clearly formulated method of acting in cases of teacher - school board disputes." The developments in teacher tenure legislation are presented succinctly in an article on this topic by Enns and Brown in the Alberta Journal of Educational Research in Alberta, vol. xii, no. 1, March, 1966, pp. 41-53, and by C.K. Brown in his Master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1963.

⁴⁵The Alberta School Trustees' Association. This organization had been revived by Hon. G.P. Smith in the last years of the Liberal regime.

⁴⁶C.K. Brown and F. Enns, op. cit., p. 45.

⁴⁷John W. Chalmers, op. cit., p. 63. Both the A.T.A. and A.S.T.A. were apparently unhappy with the new arrangement. "[The A.T.A.] contended that the inspector was not the person to give or withhold approval for terminations because such a duty was a judicial function...[and the A.S.T.A. felt] that the giving of thirty days' notice should be sufficient at any time." C.K. Brown and F. Enns, op. cit., p. 47.

⁴⁸C.K. Brown and F. Enns, op. cit., p. 49. Again the A.T.A. and the A.S.T.A. were dissatisfied with Mr. Baker's actions. The teachers "objected to the wording, saying that it required the teacher to prove his innocence....In appealing a dismissal, the teacher was, in effect, charging the board with improper discharge of its duties; it therefore rested with the teacher to prove his case." (p. 49)

⁴⁹John W. Chalmers, op. cit., p. 66. Brown and Enns (p. 52) summarize the tenure struggle as follows: "The [tenure] legislation which presently exists is to a large extent the result of an attempt to find a middle road between the demands of the teachers and the objections of their trustees."

⁵⁰"The New Administration," editorial, The A.T.A. Magazine, September, 1935, p. 2.

⁵¹Dr. Chalmers, official historian of the A.T.A., has propelled this ill-reputation for Mr. Baker into the future with his two wide-selling books, Schools of the Foothills Province, and Teachers of the Foothills Province, although Dr. Chalmers does give Mr. Baker credit for helping to initiate the Berry Creek and Turner Valley experimental units. Ibid., p. 98.

⁵²A.J.H. Powell, "The Alberta Teachers' Alliance," unpublished memoir, 1962, p. 8.

⁵³Mr. Baker has this to say concerning John W. Barnett: "John Barnett, the able and energetic secretary of the A.T.A., had brought with him from England not only his certificate but the attitude of a militant Trade Union Secretary. He was a doughty defender of the rights of the teacher as many a, perhaps, inconsiderate Rural School Board found out to its chagrin, but he was rarely able to see that there was more than one side to any issue: and if George P. Smith was unduly influenced by political considerations what shall we say of John Barnett's enthusiasm for education when, at a time when I was striving to eliminate the "Permit Teacher" and fill all the schools with well

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qualified teachers, he urged me to close the door against teachers from England. Having gotten into the ranks of Alberta teachers himself he now wanted protection of his union members from all competitors however well qualified and without regard for the interest of education." [My emphases] Correspondence, November 14, 1968. See the Baker Papers, Glenbow Foundation Archives, Calgary.

⁵⁴Dr. Ross, besides a teaching career and his service with the Department of Education, was responsible for establishing the school system of the Yukon. (Letter from Hon. Perren Baker, June 17, 1969)

⁵⁵Letter from Hon. Perren Baker, June 17, 1969. Mr. Baker in the same letter, writes further: "...viewing each problem in its broader implications, he [Dr. Ross] should frequently not see eye to eye with the paid champion of the teacher was inevitable. And I suppose it was also inevitable that he should be called "Anti-A.T.A.", just as anyone who opposes some demand of the secretary of a trade union is accused of being anti-labour."

⁵⁶W.G. Roberts. "The Alberta School Trustees' Association - A Study of the Activity of a School Organization in the Alberta Educational System," Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Alberta, 1966, p. 69.

⁵⁷John Ross may have acted with suspicion and hostility towards the fledgling A.T.A., but this reaction was not uncommon for the period. Arthur Kratzman writes that "the A.T.A. entered the complex of formal educational organizations in Alberta with an air of persistent militancy. As its early officials state, its very development exemplified a reaction against the times....The A.T.A. was early labeled as a radical trade union by its opponents, a designation which was to be evidenced for four decades...." Arthur Kratzman, "The Alberta Teachers' Association - A Documentary Analysis of the Dynamics of a Professional Organization," unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Chicago, 1963.

⁵⁸Letter from Dr. W.H. Swift, June 18, 1969.

CHAPTER VI

FOOTNOTES

¹C.P. Collins, "Local School District Organization in Canada," Canadian Education and Research Digest, volume 1, number 2, June 1961, p. 12.

²J.C. Jonason, "The Large Units of School Administration in Alberta," unpublished D.Ed. thesis, University of Oregon, 1951, p. 71.

³Alberta, Department of Education, Annual Report, p. 11.

⁴G.W. Gorman, "The Problem of Secondary Education," The A.T.A. Magazine, March 1927, p. 5.

⁵The writer has a copy of this memorandum, and there is a copy in the Baker Papers, Glenbow Foundation Archives, Calgary.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸"Address of Hon. Perren Baker, Minister of Education," Report of Annual Convention, Alberta School Trustees' Association, February, 1929, p. 89. For details as to Mr. Baker's original scheme, see the 1929 legislation (Bill Number 61) or Rural Education in Alberta, a pamphlet issued by the Department of Education, authorized by the Minister.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Unlike Mr. Aberhart, Mr. Baker wishes to see the country school preserved, if only for use of the elementary grade children: "There are some who advocate doing away with the local district. I do not. I think we need the local district." Ibid. A crucial issue to be avoided, if the local district is preserved, is the question of religious minorities: "Those who advocate doing away with the local board in Alberta forget that in the Alberta Act, passed by the Dominion Government creating this province, the right of the local district to determine through its board what religious instruction, if any, shall be given in the school, and the right of the minority, whether Protestant or Catholic, in any school district to form a

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separate district are guaranteed. To substitute the municipality or the county for the local district as it existed at that time is to radically alter the conditions governing religious instruction and the establishing of separate schools. The bill which is to be introduced in the Legislature will neither add to nor take from any rights now enjoyed with respect to religious teaching or the establishing of separate schools." Ibid., p. 92.

¹¹Ibid., p. 93.

¹²Ibid., p. 94. In a statement given to The U.F.A. Mr. Baker expresses the advantages of the larger unit in more agrarian-like terms: "What is proposed is no sinister centralization of power, but a uniting of forces for the achievements of an important end which school districts acting individually cannot accomplish....The effect of these proposals, if carried out, will not be to take from the power of local communities to make effective provision for education, but to add greatly to that power, by providing a way for rational co-operation with other communities. Perren Baker, "Proposed Changes in Alberta's School System," The U.F.A., January 2, 1929, p. 21.

¹³Letter from Mr. Baker, October 12, 1968.

¹⁴Mr. Baker's memorandum to the Premier, October 20, 1927, p. 3.

¹⁵An example of this is the statement given by a Mr. Clark: "There is no profession a boy or girl can step into today with the same expenditure of money, time and intelligence, which is so attractive and which will yield a quick return....There is no General Board setting salaries for stenographers or those in other occupations; they have to struggle to make their own way, and the return from the teaching profession is much quicker than can be obtained elsewhere. Report of the Annual Convention, A.S.T.A. February, 1929, p. 99.

¹⁶Letter from Mr. Baker, October 23, 1968.

¹⁷Barbara V. Cormack, Perennials and Politics, p. 103. The opposition to the new School Act came not as a response to the entire proposed Act, for most of the clauses were taken over without change from the previous legislation. The opposition centered on an attack against Section XVI of the proposed Act, that section dealing with the formation of larger units of school administration.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 104. The promise of the Baker Bill, as seen by Mrs. Parlby, was: equalization of opportunities and diversification of education", (p. 125). Both of these aims were consistent with agrarian ideology. Generally, the U.F.W.A. had been consistent supporters of the proposals embodied within the Baker Bill.

¹⁹Notes of the School Bill Debate, 1929, Hon. Perren Baker papers.

²⁰"Minister of Education Explains Provisions of the School Bill", The U.F.A., April 1, 1930, p. 20.

²¹Letter from Hon. Perren Baker, October 23, 1968.

²²Notes of the School Bill Debate, 1930, Hon. Perren Baker papers.

²³Minister of Education Withdraws School Bill for Present," The U.F.A., April 15, 1930, pp. 14-15.

²⁴This statement of Mr. Lang's argument comes from the minutes of the Legislative papers in the Perren Baker papers, and the news report carried in The U.F.A., March 22, 1929, pp. 14,15.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Report of Mr. Baker's speech in The U.F.A., March 22, 1929, p. 15. Speaking to the same kind of accusation the next year - that of the centralizing of ministerial control, - Mr. Baker said: "The Bill that is now before the House does not give the Minister any powers other than those he now has, no powers of any different character - the same sort of powers which the Minister now exercises." Notes of debate, March 20, 1930, Hon. Perren Baker papers.

²⁸Report of proceeding in The U.F.A., April 1, 1930, p. 48. Reacting politically to the change made in the Baker Bill, the Conservative party moved in favor of "making the adoption of educational reform compulsory." Ibid., p. 47.

²⁹Ibid. The objections raised by political opponents were not sincere expressions of their own thinking, Mr. Baker believes today. They played the political game

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to the limit on this controversial issue.

30 Letter from Hon. Perren Baker, October 23, 1968.

31 "Principle of Proposed New School Act approved by U.F.A. Convention," The U.F.A., February 8, 1929, p. 15. The resolution read as follows: "Resolved that we heartily approve the principle of the proposed changes in the Rural School System of this Province as outlined by the Minister of Education and

Further, that in the raising of the funds for educational purposes as proposed, we believe that the Rural School areas of the entire Province should be grouped into one district having a flat mill rate on assessed valuation and one salary schedule for teachers, based upon qualifications and experiences." Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 "The Alberta Teachers' Alliance and the Proposed New School Act," The U.F.A., April 1, 1929, pp. 15, 38, 39. Further to his statement, Mr. Barnett wrote: "...we believe strongly in local autonomy and consider that the unit of administration for taxation and all general purposes should be the Division, leaving it free to set its own mill-rate, appoint its own administrative and supervisory officers (subject to the approval of the Department of Education) appoint and pay its own teachers, and free also to adapt the system and course of studies reasonably free from Departmental domination....

34 "The Proposed New School Act," The A.T.A. Magazine, October, 1928, pp. 4, 5. Unfortunately, the support of the Alberta Teachers' Alliance would not sit well with the School Trustees, many of whom were suspicious of the scheme to begin with. In personal interview, Mr. Baker insisted that the A.T.A. did not give his plan much support, yet most evidence seems to indicate that the leadership of the A.T.A. supported the Baker Bill.

35 The exhaustion from this "strife," Mr. Goresky claims, explains Mr. Baker's refusal "to attempt any amelioration in the status of the teacher...." I. Goresky, "The Beginning and Growth of the Alberta School System," M.Ed. thesis, 1944, p. 147. Mr. Goresky sat on the government benches as a M.L.A. during this period. Mr. Baker, in personal interview, denied these suppositions.

³⁶Letter from Dr. G.S. Lord, June 14, 1969. Dr. Lord had approached the premier concerning the closing of the Edmonton Normal School. Of course, it is difficult to understand the economic stringencies under which the government must have operated. As Mrs. Cormack writes: "The [U.F.A.] administration came in on a depression and went out on a bigger one. Many idealistic and progressive plans had to be curtailed, changed and even abandoned in favor of the more mundane projects of family and farm relief, soup kitchens, debt adjustment regulations, and other forms of relief to keep body and soul together." Op. cit., p. 95.

³⁷Report of Legislative addresses, Hon. Perren Baker papers, Glenbow Foundation, Calgary. Dr. Swift believes that Mr. Baker had a long way to go in educating the rural people about the value of the larger school unit: "In the main rural people did not want large school administrative units. They feared them for what they might do and what they might cost, and still had strong attachment to and confidence in the small school district." Letter from Dr. Swift, November 13, 1968.

³⁸Mr. Baker received these and other congratulatory letters from educational leaders across the continent. These letters are found among the Perren Baker papers in the writers' possession, and will be deposited with the Baker Papers, Glenbow Foundation Archives, Calgary. This kind of response to his Bill greatly encouraged the Minister. He, as keenly as Premier Brownlee, felt the impact of the depression on the prairie. And astute politician that he was, Perren Baker was not willing to throw aside the politicians major tool - expediency.

³⁹This information is contained in C.P. Collins', "Local School District Organization in Canada", Canadian Education and Research Digest, volume 1, number 2, June, 1961, p. 14-15.

⁴⁰Letter from Dr. W.H. Swift, November 13, 1968. Dr. Swift maintains that even with a U.F.A. victory in that 1935 election, the organizational reforms could not have gone ahead nearly so soon.

⁴¹C.P. Collins, op. cit., p. 13.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Jean Burnet, Next-Year Country, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1959. The section on the Berry Creek School Division includes pages 134 to 145.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 138.

⁴⁶"Economic conditions similar to those in Alberta, near Hanna, led the boards of trustees' to 17 school districts [in the Peace River Bloc] to agree to resign and have the whole area administered by the inspector of schools as the official trustee. The results appeared so promising during the first year of operation that four more units were formed the following year." C.P. Collins, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

⁴⁷C.P. Collins, op. cit., p. 14.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Notes taken from a taped interview with Hon. Perren Earle Baker, Vancouver, British Columbia, May 21-24, 1969. This tape will be deposited among the Baker papers, Glenbow Foundation Archives, Calgary.

The Farmers' Dissatisfaction With Party Politics:

I always thought the farmers weren't exercising any great influence - they could have joined in any other party and taken an active part and pulled their weight there, but naturally the organizations were in the towns; and the town people, the lawyers and the men who had more leisure for that sort of thing, formed the parties. So the farmers felt a little outish. As I said to Archie McLean before the [1921] election - Archie McLean was a substantial rancher from the Pincher Creek Country or somewhere in there, and Minister of Public Works in the Liberal Government - we don't want anyone to give us good government; we want to govern ourselves'. Well, of course, what I meant was that we wanted to share in it more. It was largely the farmers' fault that they didn't have a bigger say. They could have gone, as I say. The feeling among the farmers - Barbara [Villy Cormack] brings it out in her book very well - was that it was pretty well run by a handfull. And patronage ran pretty rife. The man that supports [the Liberal Government] he gets things done. That was felt. And it was one thing that our government [U.F.A.] was very

much against.

Co-operation and Competition:

We must co-operate in order to compete. You can't get away from competition. Trees in the forest compete. You can't help it. We co-operate in order better to compete. There is a lot of damn nonsense about co-operation. But this Mr. Wood did do, I felt at the time: he brought an idealism to that movement, and that's where it finally got its real push. It was the idealism of it. It was a strong motive. There are many people for whom the U.F.A. was their religion and their church - they worked for it, they devoted their time and money for it.

On Education:

Education is what it is to try to develop the power in people and make them acquainted with what is. And broaden their lives in every way. You can call it idealism, of course. I guess that is what it is, idealism.

I think of education and an educated man [as] not one who knows how to run a motor. He is not one who knows a lot of law. He's not one who knows a lot about medicine. An educated person is just a little more than any one of those specialists. You don't need a whole world of educated persons, and not all the whole world will be educated persons. Not all school teachers are educated persons.

Comments on Rural Education:

We [Department of Education] weren't concerned particularly with the U.F.A. [and their wishes]. We were concerned with the education of the province. As you have gathered, my chief anxiety was with rural education. People were just not educated. Oh there was, here and there and there and there. But the general level that I always talked about was too low. The only way you could improve that was by getting the schools to run, having the schools run, and then getting better teachers.

I was much more concerned to get them to be able to read and write and speak English and some acquaintance in the world they had to live in, than giving them these ideals of co-operation [my emphases]. I don't think the school can be expected to do everything. And something the home doesn't do, the school won't do better.

If we could get all our schools manned by superior people, devoted, with ideals and all that, the whole tenor of society would be changed in a generation.

You cannot give children the benefits if you just keep them in the country all the time. In those days [farm people] couldn't give them the chance for education in the country. Fortunately, we [my family] went to Edmonton just when Bert [Mr. Baker's eldest son] had exhausted the local possibilities. I missed intellectual companionship [in the country], and your children didn't have it, you see. They go to school with little children that come out of homes that are illiterate, or if not illiterate, with

a low level of educational attainment. I extolled the advantage of the simple life and all that, but...(!)

The Large Unit

The government wasn't prepared [to pass the Baker Bill]. It wasn't a very feasible thing to do in our last session when we were just wobbling, and Aberhart was sweeping the country. It probably was a good thing that I didn't pass it. It was left for them; it was their baby. I don't expect the trustees' had changed much. They didn't want to lose their little job.

Everybody wasn't ready to consolidate [before 1935].

The Minimum Salary for Teachers

I don't doubt that it may be that school boards did engage teachers for less [than the minimum salary at the time, \$840.00 per year]. And, often, the money wasn't there. I deplored those districts where they couldn't pay the minimum salary. Never to my desk did there come [a request] for permission to pay less than the minimum. At least I haven't the slightest memory of any such thing. [And] if this permission had not been given, the teachers would have got [sic] this money? They don't pay money they haven't got. You've got to get it first. That is what employers [sic: employees] and salaried people sometimes don't realize: the outfit's got to get it. That year there was a cutdown; everybody took less, the government and all....The cabinet, civil service, all through, they

took a cut. Ministers' and all.

It was a black mark for me and our government that I wouldn't raise the minimum salary. I contended that the trouble with our system was not that the starting salary was too low; it was that there wasn't any provision that there should be increases if it was low. And you couldn't do it under that kind of system. They had to have a larger unit in order that this could be done: that there could be a schedule, and advances, and that.

This was a time when the grants were not very big, and every little local school district had to raise a sum of money. And in very many places that little girl [the teacher] who came from the district or the neighboring one, went back, and was getting more [salary] than the farmers were who had to raise it. They didn't have as much as she was getting. And their families. That was the situation. I felt very strongly...the evil wasn't the starting, but there should be provision for advance as they proved their worth.

Tenure of Office

There are two sides to [this question]. It worked to keep in people it shouldn't; and I kept in people that shouldn't be. I thought that [merit pay] was wonderful, but how would you do it? The teacher may be worth less this year than last, but you can't measure these things. Just not feasible. What can you do about security of tenure in a school system of 3000 school boards and

teachers. When we got the larger unit and the control ...maybe there would be room for something of the sort, but this security of tenure has been a little bit overdone: you cure one evil and you create another just as big or bigger.

John T. Ross, Deputy Minister of Education, 1916-1933.

[Our relationship] was very close. I had a great respect for him, for his judgement, and acted on it in most instances. You see, it's only a small part of the workings of the Department of Education that comes across the desk of the Minister. The branches have their work and they do it. A good Deputy, he looks after most things. He'd often bring people in to me, and, of course, the general policy was determined by the Minister with the advice of the people who knew about it. Let those who were professionals make the best job they could of it.

Building the New Social Order

The rebellious young people, they say something's wrong. Well there has always been something wrong. I did too. I saw that things were wrong; you saw that in what you read last night [Mr. Baker's "Reminiscences"]. I was just against the Establishment. But I didn't think I should go out [and protest violently]. They [youth] envisage that if people would just do something, we'd have a wonderful, perfect world. And the socialists talk about the same way. H.W. [Wood] envisaged that. It isn't true. You don't get

rid of competition. As I said, you co-operate in order to compete....H.W. competed before that convention where Archie Muir was up for nomination. There was quite a push. H.W. competed there and won out. Competition has got to be! Mr. Wood just was a little woolly about that. It's just that utopia we think ought to be, it isn't to be with human beings. It isn't going to be. It's going to be a struggle; you've got to make up your mind to live with it, improving things from time to time as you can.

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